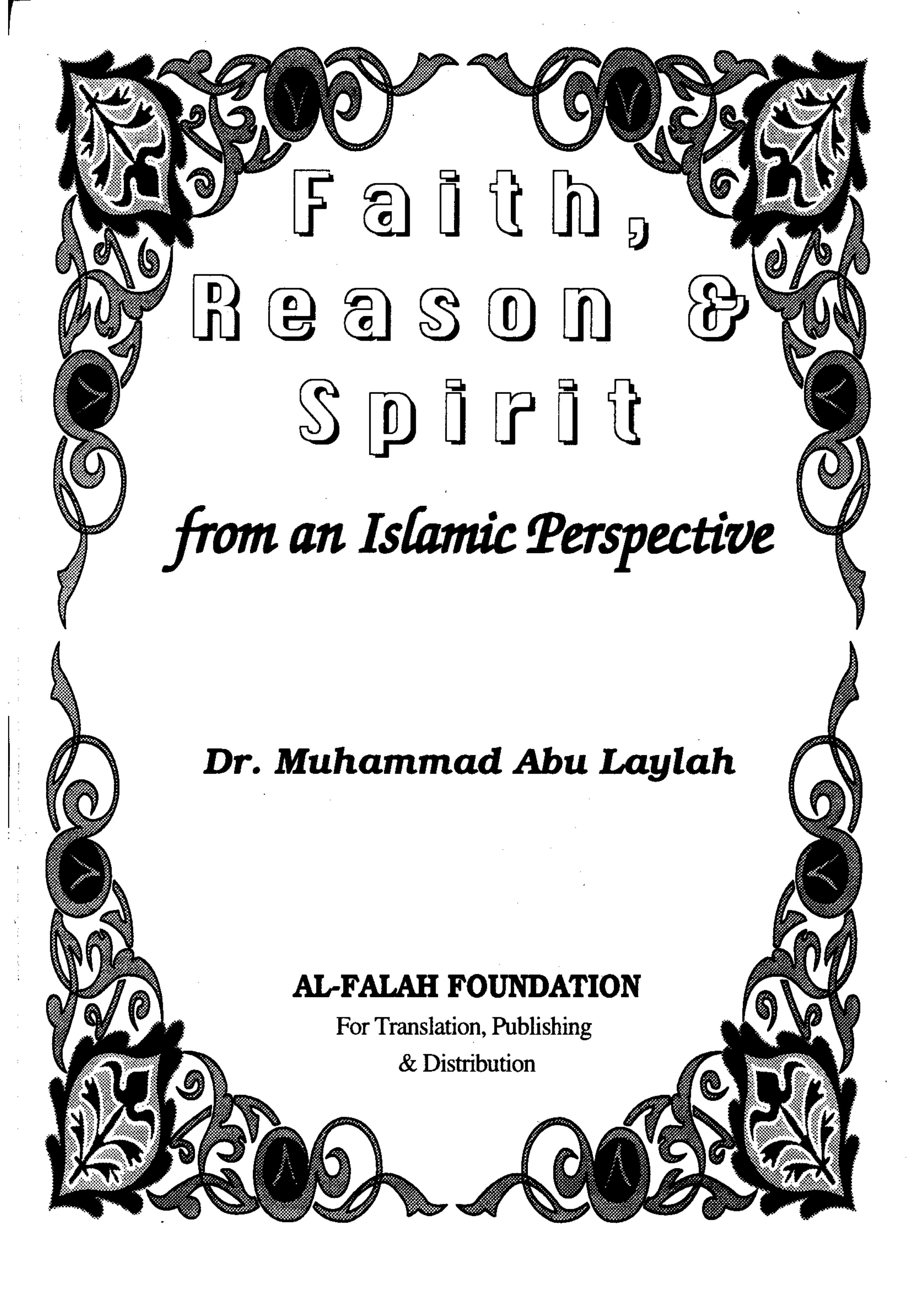


Faith, Reason & Spirit

from an Islamic Perspective

Dr. Muhammad Abu Laylah

AL-FALAH FOUNDATION
For Translation, Publishing
& Distribution

Published by:

AL-FALAH FOUNDATION

For Translation, Publishing & Distribution

24 Tairan St, Nasr City
Cairo - Egypt
Tel.: 2622838

مؤسسة الفلاح

للترجمة والنشر والتوزيع

٢٤ ش الطيران – مدينة نصر
القاهرة – مصر
ت : ٢٦٢٢٨٣٨

I.S.B. N. : 977-5813-43-3

رقم الإيداع : ٩٩/١١٠٠٠

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Foreword

It gives us great pleasure to introduce Dr. M. Abu Laylah's *Faith, Reason and Spirit*. Dr. Abu Laylah is an eminent figure in the field of *Da`wah* (calling to Islam) all over the world. It is hoped that through the efforts of scholars like him a new tradition in the field of Islamic studies will be established.

A person, who strives only for wealth and honor, may become restless and miserable, remaining unaware in this condition of all that he lacks, nor may he understand the means of correcting the situation. *Faith, Reason and Spirit* gives a clear, concise and authentic exposition of the means that bring happiness and serenity. The author emphasizes that man's faith should be sincere, strong, unswerving and undaunted in the storms of life. In doing so, Dr. Abu Laylah quotes some works of four eminent Muslim scholars: al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, al-Kindi, and ar-Razi. Needless to say, the main concern of the author is to highlight the Muslim literature as crystalyizing the peace of Islam, the peace of the inward self, the peace with others and with the world.

Finally, all praise and thanks are due to Allah, without Whose help and guidance no work can be accomplished.

Al-Falah Director
Muhammad Abdu



Introduction

This is a useful and timely book. The author offers translations of Arabic texts written by eminent scholars who have been influential in Islamic thought and have had great influence on the Arab civilization.

They lived long ago but their ideas and thoughts are still valid and worth adopting lasting values in the field of education, philosophy, medicine and psychology.

Ibn Sina, Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali and Al-Kindi are well-known names in both the West and the East, not only among Muslims. Some of their writings have been translated into several languages.

For this book we have selected some texts which are particularly relevant to today at a time when everything is in chaos. It is extremely important to establish some foundations of basic values and universal truths for all spheres of our life. Scientists are forging ahead with discoveries, perhaps without considering the moral consequences of their developments. Scientists work on the fabric of Allah's creation, Allah's property, without referring to Him without recognizing art. For example, the recent giant underground channels were built by American physicists Underling Island in the hope of explaining the Big Bang in which the world originated. By contrast, amazingly enough in the same country, the church has ruled that the schools in the whole state of Texas should teach creationism, not Darwin's theory of evolution.

We faced problems about cloning animals, which is a merciless intervention in Allah's creation. Some scientists have even cloned humans.

The atom bomb and other weapons of mass destruction mastered by the "super power" is another trespass upon the area of God's authority and His creation. In politics many destructive decisions are made without considering the effects both on humans and the environment. The makers of international policy are apparently always engaged in making our world more terrible. Many decisions have been made that violate everlasting human values, with no regard to the consequences to the human race and the continuation of our history.

We feel that politicians and scientists work in isolation, forgetting long established human values. They are over-specialized, they decide our fate, raise money for dangerous projects, having no regard for higher matters. They control us, even the inventors of television and computers have lured us into wasting our time. Scientists may be brilliant in their special subjects but they need to widen their vision, live in the community, not in isolation. They should remember that people need a spiritual input to support and guide them. They should study theology extensively, plus, philosophy and the history of the human race (not only from a materialistic point, but also the spiritual forces which direct history).

On the other hand, if we look at economics, we see giant companies who trade at the expense of small business. Most of the wealth is concentrated in a few hands. In many countries there is overwhelming poverty. In the long run there will be a new slave class, not only people but also slave countries. Slaves

to ideas. This will lead to a horrible effect on human society. In Islam all people around the globe are regarded as one body. They should act and receive care as much as organs of one body should receive care. If one limb is deceased, the whole body will be affected. From the social aspect, there are national conferences, global conferences, international bodies. We are faced with many decisions, which work against human values, family structure and individuality. What the Qur'an and the Bible deemed to be sinful and punishable acts have become lawful.

As reformers and moralists we try to wake people to these dangers. We cry out loud, not in the wilderness but in the capital cities of our modern world. Luckily, what we say in a small room may spread everywhere, with modern means of communication. We must adjust our life and moderate our consumption of wealth and foods. Every individual in society should be given the chance to develop and have his share which is predestined by Allah.

Translating these texts and commenting on them has been with the hope that it will help to reform all communities and provide guidance towards the right path: Reality and Realization.

The texts translated here are sometimes given word for word, but necessarily every time. The reader can be assured that the true meaning is conveyed with neither addition nor omission.

In this book, I prefer to translate the part about knowledge by Imam al-Ghazali's *Ihya'* as a basis for the whole book. In the Qur'an, knowledge is the most highly regarded, even above worship. It is often said that the first section of the Qur'an to be

revealed was a command to learn. In Islam, learning is not limited in any way unless the subject is harmful to man. Reading is the key to learning and education. It should be dedicated to Allah. That is why, in the first verse of the Glorious Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was commanded to read about Allah's creation and specifically His creation of human beings. In this verse, Allah assures that He himself has taught man what he had no knowledge of, the art of writing. Thus the two means of learning, reading and writing, are specified in the first Qur'anic verse. In support of this, we also read in the Qur'an when Allah had determined to create Adam, He made him superior to angels by knowledge, not by substance. Man was created from dust, angels from light. The first favor that Allah bestowed upon Adam was teaching him the basic knowledge, the names of everything that Allah created. In the Qur'an, there are many verses commanding people to learn, reflect, discover, widen their learning, and deepen their knowledge in order to think about everything that Allah created and to understand the laws governing them. Allah, Most High, has granted man the ability to search, analyze and deduce. Our mind takes time to work things out, to understand step by step how to form ideas and transform them into action. No body was born intellectual.

Nothing in the world was created by accident. Everything, including man, has its law and predestined rules. In Islam, Knowledge cannot be separated from religion. They must work together in harmony. Once separated, confusion, arrogance and egoism breed. Evil becomes uncontrolled. The most intelligent takes control over the less fortunate, the less intelligent and misuses them.

In Islam, learning is on a par with worship and belief. Ignorance is a cause of disbelief and mischief. Ignorance is like a poison. A little may kill, just as a large amount may kill.

Scholars are highly regarded by Allah and their works and investigations are appreciated by Him. They are the most God-fearing, and in return they are the most respected by Him. The ink they use in writing is weighed against the blood of martyrs and is even more precious. Allah promises them high thrones and a first rank in Paradise. People should give them reverence and love, care about their comfort, and make use of their learning and follow their advice. In this book, we have written about the fear of death by al-Kindi and how it may be overcome, why we hate death and how to overcome our fear of it. Death comes to everyone and everyone fears it but nobody can defeat it. Death does not give warning but comes suddenly. Death is a sign of Allah's power and authority. It is also a sign of our weakness and total submission to the higher authority of Allah's Law. Our stay in this world is temporary. We were born so shall we die. If we accept this fact and work according to Allah's teachings, our fear of death will be less even non-existent.

We should work in our life as if we are going to live forever, and work for the next life as if we are going to die tomorrow. In this context, Imam `Ali said, "We are like someone who has two houses. If he looks after only one, when he is obliged to go and live in the other, he will find it an ordeal, but he has to live there. He has to leave the home first."

Also, I have translated a text about melancholy, its causes, and how to overcome it. Sadness and worry are the most



immoral enemies of man in this life. Sadness sometimes has its causes, whether in the environment or within us, a breakdown in one's personal chemistry or psyche. Sometimes it can be cured while at other times it is incurable. This is because we exaggerate expectations and are therefore disappointed.

Possessions bring worries. A poor man can be happier than a wealthy one. Most of our unhappiness stems from the fact that we are never satisfied with what we have. We always look for the best even if it may be the worst for us. We are attracted by the outward glitter and color without considering the true substance. We try to carry more than we can bear. Everybody is trying to please himself and to be happy without reflecting on how long he may live and how long he will have possession of his treasures.

We cannot value the favors we have in hand. We only realize their true value when we have lost them, and then we are sad. it is our mistake, because we regard transitory things as durable. Out of false pride and arrogance we think we are worthy because of our possessions. They gave us status. We are badly affected by our possessions. We use them to make us happy but they are also means of making other people miserable. That is why we feel so depressed when we lose them because we cannot continue to be arrogant. We are afraid of people holding us in contempt and treating us even worse than we treat them.

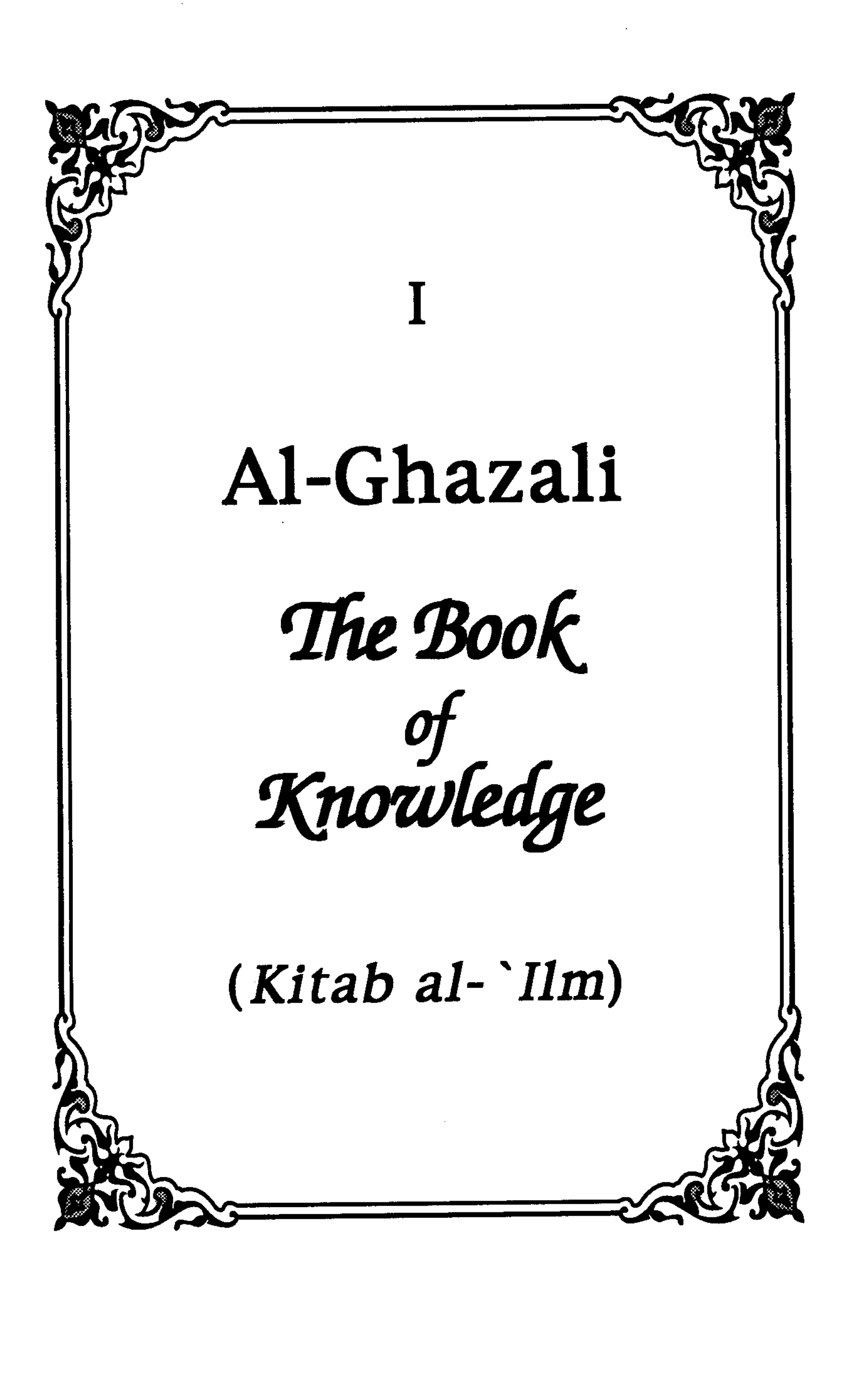
Sadness is not connected to poverty or lack of wealth. Otherwise most of the prophets, philosophers and wise men would have been miserable, since they were not rich. But they were happy, active and satisfied with what they had. They were free of care and their wealth is what has been left for us, a

continual everlasting treasure providing wisdom, comfort and a good example.

The mind takes its ideas from the materialistic world. Sometimes they are inspired by Allah. Mind can develop from feebleness to strength and then becomes weak again with age, needing support. Our minds cannot work the same way about everything. We have different opinions, different ways of understanding, different reactions. The prophets of Allah all agree about the principal ideas concerning Allah: His Oneness, absolute Omniscience, and they agree on the basic principal values, the basic matters concerning human life.

In the texts translated here, with comments and evaluation, we shed light on these matters.

Dr. Muhammad Abu Laylah



I

Al-Ghazali

The Book of Knowledge

(*Kitab al-`Ilm*)

Preface

Al-Ghazali's Life

Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Tusi al-Ghazali (450-505 AH/1058-1111 AC) was known as the authority and ornament of Islam. He is an encyclopedic author, polymath, a great jurist, theorist, philosopher, theologian, moralist, critic, comparative religionist; above all he was a religious reformer and spiritual revivalist who sacrificed himself to his beliefs and ideas.

He was born in Tus near Persia (Iran). Having gained an excellent reputation as a scholar, he was appointed in 484 AH (1091 AC) by the Seljuk minister Nizam al-Mulk as a teacher at Nizamiyya Academy in Baghdad. Al-Ghazali proved a great and influential lecturer in the institute and his followers grew in number until they outnumbered even the retinues of the emirs and magnates. After a while he gave up the entirety of his worldly position and led the way of renunciation and solitude. He devoted some of his time in Jerusalem to worshiping, learning contemplation and writing. After a life filled with great intellectual and spiritual achievements. Al-Ghazali died on Monday, the fourteenth of Jumada al-Akhira in the year 505 AH (1111 AC) at Tabaran, the citadel of Tus.

Al-Ghazali's writings, whether biographical or of general academic content, hold a faithful mirror to the society of his time and to his own person. From his writings we may glean the

details of his life and valuable information about his psychology. Al-Ghazali is not merely a theoretical writer. He illustrates his arguments with real examples, and his advice is based on his own experience. He was writing to people whose needs were known to him. He was one of the greatest Imams in the field of reformation, and as such he suffered from what we may call the sickness of his society and paid for it.

Al-Ghazali occupies a unique position among Islamic philosophers in recommending doubt within the boundary of faith. He says that "anyone who does not doubt will not investigate, and anyone who does not see will remain in blindness and error." Al-Ghazali, here as elsewhere, considers skepticism as a source of knowledge and discovery because anybody who blindly accepts is not investigating or fathoming what he accepts.

He struggled against evil forces, ill-thinking, and false assumptions which traded in the name of Islam until his death. He did not buckle under criticism; rather, it gave him added strength to stand his ground. He was afflicted by the people of his time. They were a trial to him. He was not a politician but he suffered the bad symptoms that afflict those who deal in politics. He was attacked by the germs of hypocrisy, which surrounded his fellow scholars. He suffered because of the unhealthy differences, which existed between the Muslim sects, Sunni and Shi`ite, which had reached a dangerous zenith in his time, and because of the corruption among the adherents of Sufism and the theologians.

The sects that claimed to be part of Islam were at war among themselves. Shi`a, Sunna, Mutazilite, Ismaili, Batinyya, theologians, the patrons of the Brothers of Purity, and the natural

philosophers all these were ranged on one side, and al-Ghazali on the other.

As a child and as a young man before the age of twenty, he was recklessly ambitious, and daring. He says that he thirsted after comprehension of things as they really are. This was his obsession from an early age; it was instinctive, part of his God given nature, a matter of temperament not of choice or contriving. But the more he progressed into the fields of academic and religious thinking of his society, the more he suffered, to the point that at a time of his greatest success, when he occupied the highest academic chair in al-Nizamiyya University in Baghdad, teaching 300 students, he lost all desire to continue.

Al-Ghazali's writings shed light on his biography, his society, his religion, his sufi experience and the details of history and the social disparities of his time. He, moreover, introduced influential contributions to different Islamic sciences. Among these works, one can observe the following titles *Mi`yaral Ilm* (The Yardstick of Knowledge), which was written to help confused students and academics perceive what knowledge is false, what genuine: what should be accepted, what should be rejected. This led the Imam to write *Mizan Al-`amal* (The Yardstick of Action) and *Tahafut al Falasaifa* (Contradictions among the Philosophers).

In his voluminous encyclopedic work "The Revival of the Religious Sciences" he wrote about the religious branches of knowledge and the religious communities of his time. *Al-Munqidh min ad-Dalal* (The Deliverance from Confusion) may be categorized as autobiographical in nature, it is of prime

importance because al-Ghazali profiles some highly important information about himself as a man and as a thinker, and about his evaluation of contemporary religious thinking and trends. However, the following is a translation of the first part of Imam al-Ghazali's Book of Knowledge in *Ihya' `Ulum Ad-Din*.

The Book of Knowledge

First, I thank Allah. I thank Him continually, again and again, although the gratitude of those who thank Him can never be enough when measured against His great goodness.

Secondly, I pray (to Allah) that peace may be upon Muhammad, the best of all people, and also upon all other prophets of Allah.

Thirdly, I beg Allah to guide me in my purpose, in writing a book, which is intended to revive man's knowledge of religion.

Fourthly, I say to my adversaries, those arrogant fools who attack me and deny this knowledge, that I will devote every effort to setting you right and meeting your false arguments.

Merits of Knowledge, Learning and Teaching

The Islamic texts and arguments that serve as evidence for their merits are as follows:

Merits of Knowledge

Evidence from the Qur'an

Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴾*Allah bears witness that there is no god but He and the angels and those who have true knowledge - upholding justice, there is no god but He.*﴿

(Al `Imran: 18)

In this verse, one can see that Allah begins by mentioning himself, then, secondly, his angels, and then, thirdly, "the people of knowledge".

How can I convey to you the great significance, nobility and illustriousness of this statement (about knowledge and learned people). Allah the Almighty says,

﴾*Allah will raise up in rank those of you who believe and those who have been given (true) knowledge.*﴿

(Al-Mujadilah: 11)

Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both) says, "For scholars, a place is set apart which is seven hundred times higher than the place for other believers, and it would take five hundred years to get from one rank to the other."[1]

Allah, the Almighty, says,

﴾*Are they equal those who know and those who know not.*﴿

(Az-Zumar:9)

﴾*Those truly fear Allah, among his servants are those who have true knowledge.*﴿

(Fatir: 28)

﴾*Say: Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and whosoever possesses knowledge of the book.*﴿

(Ar-Ra`d: 43)

1. This is a metaphorical way of saying that the learned people rank much higher than ordinary believers. In other words, knowledge, combined with faith ranks much higher than faith without knowledge.

﴾*Said one who had knowledge of the book: 'I will bring it to thee before even you twinkle your eye.'*﴿

(An-Naml:40)

This verse indicates that the person referred to in it was able to achieve his purpose only by the power of knowledge.[1]

Allah says,

﴾*But those to whom knowledge had been given said, woe upon you! The reward of Allah is better for him who believes, and works righteousness, and none shall receive it except the steadfast.*﴿

(Al-Qasas: 80)

Here, Allah clearly demonstrates that the high ranking of the Hereafter can only be understood by means of knowledge. Again, Allah says,

﴾*And those parables, we have set forth for people, but none understands them except those who are firm in knowledge.*﴿

(Al-`Ankabut: 43)

﴾*If they had referred it (the concerned matter) to the messenger and to those in authority among them, those of them who are qualified to investigate would have known it.*﴿

(An-Nisa': 83)

1. This refers to King Solomon, who asked his counselors how quickly they could bring the throne of Bilqis to Jerusalem. The genie said he would have fetched it before Solomon had time to rise from his sitting position, but the learned man said he could bring it in the twinkling of an eye. The implication is that learning is more effective than even the power of a genie Solomon was thankful to Allah that he had men endowed with such power, and he had the throne of Bilqis transported to his palace and transformed as he desired, without Bilqis even knowing it.

Here, Allah gives His authority to scholars to investigate matters, making their ranking equal to that of the prophets of Allah, since they also discover (and explain) Allah's law.

Evidence from the *Sunnah*

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

> *"Anyone whom Allah wants to bless, gives him a good understanding of religion and inspires him to do the right thing."*[1]

> *"The learned are the heirs of the prophets."*[2]

It is beyond dispute that prophethood is the highest ranking of all, and there is no higher honor than to inherit that ranking.

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

> *"For devout scholars every thing in heaven and on earth seeks forgiveness."*[3]

---

1. All authorities accept this *hadith*. It is initially reported by Mu`awya Ibn Abi Sufyan, but without the phrase "*Wa Yulhimuhu Rushdah*", "the ability to understand", which appears in al-Tabarani's *al-Mu`jam al- Kabir*.
2. Reported by Abu al-Darda', al-Tirmidhi. Ibn Majah and Ibn Hibban.
3. This bit of *hadith* is part of the one mentioned above. It is important to understand that this *hadith* explains that all creation is happy with scholars who keep the faith. "Seeking forgiveness", for these scholars does not mean that they are especially sinful, or that they are exempt from the need to strive to behave well. "Seeking forgiveness for scholars" means that they may err during their investigations and efforts, but all creation pray to Allah to forgive them in their well-meaning activities. Good scholars work in harmony with Allah's creation, keep the balance between creation and scholarship, and remain in Allah's grace. Nevertheless, mistakes are unavoidable for humans, and forgiveness is always required. It is important to know that the Qur'an says that angels in heaven seek forgiveness for believers. To be a believer is not to be infallible. What higher rank can there be than the position of a man for whom the angels of heaven and earth are continually seeking forgiveness? He is occupied with his investigations and others concern with seeking forgiveness for him.

"It is undisputed that wisdom increases the honor of someone who is already held in honor, and it raises a slave to the rank of kings."[1]

By this fact, Allah indicated that knowledge bears fruit in this world. However, there is no doubt that in the Hereafter knowledge bears even better, more permanent fruit. He says,

"There are two things, which cannot be found in a hypocrite: a good appearance, and the fiqh of religion." [2]

Do not doubt this *hadith* when you see scholars who are hypocrites nowadays. The Prophet (pbuh) did not mean by the term *Fiqh* the mere understanding. The term has a wider meaning, which will be explained later.

Even the worst kind of lawyers knows that the Hereafter is better than this world. If he truly applies this knowledge, and lets it rule his actions, then he can rise above his hypocrisy or ostentation. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"The best of people is a scholar with firm belief, who does good when asked, and stands aloof unless he is approached."[3]

"Belief is naked. It should be clothed in the fear of Allah. A sense of shame is its ornament. Knowledge is its fruit."[4]

---

1. Reported by Abu Nu`im in *al-Hilya* and by Ibn Abd-al-Bar in *Bayan al-llm* and by Abd al-Ghani al-Azdi in *Adab al-Muhadith min Hadith Anas*, but the transmission is weak.
2. Reported by Al-Bukhari and transmitted by Al-Tirmidhi - it is "strange" (*gharib*).
3. Reported by al- Baihaqi in *Shu`ap al-Iman*, via Abu al-Darda', *Mawqufan*, but the *Isnad* is weak.

4 Reported by al-Hakim in *Tarikh Nisabur* via Abu al- Darda'. The *Isnad*, however, is weak.

"Scholars and Allah's warriors are nearest in rank to prophethood. Scholars have been sent with the same mission as the prophets. They are to serve as guides to the people. Warriors use their weapons to fight in the cause of Allah, protecting what the Prophets brought from Allah." [1]

"The death of a whole tribe is more bearable than the death of one learned man."[2]

"Men are like gold and silver, those people who were the best in the pre-Islamic period are the best in Islam provided that they have acquired knowledge of religion."[3]

"On the Day of Judgment, the ink of the scholars will be weighed against the blood of the martyrs."[4]

"On the Day of Judgment I will intercede and bear witness for anyone who has memorized and taught others forty traditions, hadiths, from my followers."[5]

"Anyone who follows me and memorizes forty hadiths will rank as a greatly learned scholar when he meets Allah."[6]

"Anyone who acquires knowledge of Allah's religion will find that Allah the Almighty has the answer to all his worries. Allah will feed him from a store beyond imagining."[7]

---

1. Reported by Abu Nu`aim in the support of the virtuous scholar via Ibn Abbas but the *Isnad* is weak.
2. Reported by Al-Tabarani and Ibn Abd al-Barr, from Abu al-Darda'.
3. Reported by Abu Hurairah. The *Hadith* authorities say it is *maqbul*, i.e. accepted.
4. Reported by Ibn Abd al-Barr from Abu al-Darda', but the *Isnad* is weak.
5. Reported by Ibn Abd al-Barr from Ibn Umar, the *Isnad* is weak.
6. Reported by Ibn Abd al-Barr from Anas, and he stated that the *Isnad* is weak.
7. Reported by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi in his *Tarikh*. The *Isnad*, however, is weak.

"Allah spoke to Abraham, "O Abraham, I am All-Wise, and I love every wise man."

"learned people are given to the world as Allah's trustees."

"There are two groups among the people of my nation. If they are good the whole people will follow them and be good. If they are corrupt the whole nation will be corrupt. The two groups are the rulers and the scholars."[1]

"If ever the day comes when I do not increase my knowledge of how to come nearer to Allah, the rising sun will bring me no blessing on that day."[2]

The Prophet (pbuh) ranked knowledge above worship and martyrdom, saying,

"A learned man is superior to a worshiper by the same amount that I am superior to the lowest among my companions." [3]

You should take good note of how he linked knowledge with the rank of prophethood, and how he thought little of a scholar who does not put his knowledge into action, even though he might be a worshiper who is continually worshiping, and clearly possessed enough knowledge to cause him to worship. Without a certain amount of knowledge nobody would worship.[4]

He (pbuh) said,

1. Reported by Ibn `Abd al-Barr and Abu Nu`aim form Ibn `Abbas.
2. Reported by At-Tabarani in *al-Awsat* and Abu Nu`aim in *al-Hilya.*
3. Reported by At-Tirmidhi.
4. Here, Imam al-Ghazali does not acknowledge any separation between knowledge and worship or faith. Knowledge of Allah must be the basis of divine devotion in general.

"A learned man is as superior to an ordinary worshiper as the moon is to the stars." [1]

"On the Day of Judgment, first the prophets will intercede, then the scholars, and then the martyrs." [2]

This apparently signifies that scholars rank high, coming close behind the Prophets, and above the martyrs. This is in addition to what is said about the merits of martyrdom. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Allah has not given anyone a thing more excellent than understanding of religion. The devil is more frightened of one scholar than of a thousand worshipers. Everything has a foundation and the foundation of this religion is good understanding of that religion." [3]

"The best part of your religion is the easiest, and the best way of worshipping is to acquire religious knowledge." [4]

"A scholar who believes ranks 70 degrees higher than a worshiper who believes." [5]

"You are living at a time when there are many scholars, but few who preach and recite the Qur'an; there are few who beg and many who give; and deeds are considered better than knowledge, but soon there will come a time when there will be few scholars, but many preachers and reciters of the Qur'an; few who give and many who beg, then knowledge will be better than deeds." [6]

---

1. Reported by Abu Dauwd and at-Tirmidhi.
2. Reported by Ibn Majah.
3. Reported by at-Tabarani.
4. Reported by Ibn `Abd al-Barr.
5. Reported by Ibn `Adiyy.
6. Reported by at-Tabarani.

"A learned man ranks one hundred degrees above an ordinary worshiper. The distance from each degree to the next is how far a powerful race horse could run in seventy years." [1]

Someone once asked the Prophet, "O Prophet of Allah! Which is the best of all action?" He answered, "knowledge". Then he was asked, "What knowledge do you mean?" He said, "Knowledge about Allah". They said, "We asked about actions and you are talking about knowledge." The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Even a few deeds benefit if they are based on the knowledge of Allah, and a great many deeds bring no benefit if you have no knowledge of Allah."[2]

Moreover, the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"On the Day of Judgment, Allah will raise up the worshipers and then the scholars. He will say to the learned men, 'O assembly of scholars, I did not entrust you with my knowledge without knowing you. I did not give it to you in order to punish you now. Go, I certainly forgive you.'"[3]

Sayings of the Wise Men

`Ali Ibn Abi Talib said to Kumayl[4], "O Kumayl, knowledge is better than riches. Knowledge is a protection, but you have to protect your riches (knowledge dispenses justice, while riches cry out for justice). Riches grow less as you use them, while knowledge increases as you use it."

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1. Stated by al-Asfhani in *at-Targhib wa at-Tarhib.*
2. Reported by Ibn `Abd al-Barr.
3. Reported by at-Tabarani.
4. Kumayl Ibn Ziyad an-Nakh`i was murdered by al-Hajaj in 83 AH- 702 AC.

He also said, "A scholar is better than a man who prays and fights for the sake of Allah. When a scholar dies, it is a calamity for Islam, which can only be mitigated by finding a successor."

Furthermore, he said in verse,

Glory is due to none but the learned.

Guided are they, living proof to the seekers of guidance.

Honor is due to each for his knowledge.

Disgraced are the untaught, the hinderers of learning.

In the getting of knowledge is avoidance of death.

All men must die, but scholars live on.

Abu Al-Aswad said, "Nothing is more honorable than knowledge. Kings rule the people, but scholars rule kings."

Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him and his father, said that Solomon, the son of David, was given the choice between riches, knowledge or kingship. He chose knowledge, then he was given knowledge - and the kingship all together.[1]

Ibn al-Mubarak[2] was asked, "What is the definition of a man?" He replied, "A scholar". Then he was asked, "What is a king?" He replied, "An ascetic." Then he was asked, "Who are the meanest of men?" He replied, "Those who sacrifice their religion for the sake of worldly pleasures." He did not regard anybody as a man except for scholars. This is because the quality that distinguishes people from the rest of the animal kingdom is that of knowledge. A man is a man by virtue of the

1. See, for example, the Old Testament, I Kings; 3:5-15.
2. Abd Allah Ibn al-Mubarak (d. 181 AH - 797 AD). For further information about him, see *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, vol. 1, pp. 253-257 and Abu Nu`aim, *Hilyat al-Awliya'*.

things with which he is honored (his intellect or knowledge). He is not distinguished by his physical strength, since a camel is stronger than a man; he is not distinguished by his skeleton, since an elephant has stronger bones than a man; he is not distinguished by his courage, since a wild tiger is braver than a man; he is not distinguished by his appetite, since an ox has a larger belly than a man; he is not distinguished by his sexual activities since the tiniest sparrow is more active sexually than a man. Man was created for nothing but knowledge(1).

A scholar said, "I wish I knew which object could ever be attained by someone who lacked knowledge, or which.object is ever missed by someone who has obtained knowledge."

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Anyone who has been given the Qur'an and considers that someone else has been given something better than that, he is belittling something that is great in the eyes of Allah."

Fath al-Mawsili(2) (may Allah be pleased with him) once asked, "Is it not true that if a sick person is deprived of food and drink and medicine, he will die?" The people said, 'Yes, indeed, he will die.' It is the same with the heart. If the heart is deprived of wisdom and knowledge, in three days it dies". He spoke very truly, since the food of the heart is wisdom and knowledge. With these two things the heart can live, just as the body is kept alive

1. Imam Al-Ghazali here reaches a climax, naming knowledge as the purpose of man's existence. What more could be said in praise of knowledge? Al-Ghazali's statement seems to contradict the Qur'anic verse in which Allah says, "I have created jinn and mankind for nothing but to worship Me." The apparent contradiction can be dissolved if we remember that knowledge and worship are interlinked in Al-Ghazli's thinking. True knowledge leads to true worship.

2. Abu Muhammad al-Fath Ibn Sa`id al-Mawsili, of the same rank as Abu Nasr Bishr Ibn al-Harth al-Hafi (d. 227 AH - 841 AC).

with food. Anyone who does not care for acquiring knowledge becomes sick in his heart. The death of his heart is inevitable, but he does not realize this.[1]

When he dies he does not feel it because he is preoccupied with love of this world, and this has obstructed his senses, just as extreme fear blocks the pain of a wound. When death frees a man from the cares and responsibilities of this world, then he realizes that he has perished and feels deep regret, when it is in vain to regret. It is like someone in a drunken coma that feels no pain, but when he comes round he experiences the headache caused by his intoxication. It is the same with fear. We seek Allah's protection against the day when the blindfold is taken from our eyes.

The people are asleep (in this world) but will wake up on the day of their death. Al-Hasan al-Basri[2] said, "The ink of the

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1. 1. Al-Ghazali is using the word "heart" here not in the sense of the physical organ. He is stressing the importance of the heart as the center of belief, knowledge and intention, and also as the vessel of Allah's guidance and light. Muslim scholars give a different meaning to the word "heart" (Qalb, in Arabic) for example, Ibn Abbas understands it as the human mind. Other scholars shared his opinion. Al Muhasibi 165 - 243 AH (781-857 AD) defines the mind in the following words: "It is a light which Allah instills in us. It is a natural instinct with which we can see and speak. It is a light in the heart, like the light in the sensory eye. The ability of the eye is to see, the mind is the light of the heart and sight is the light of the eye. Just as there is light in the eyes which allows us to perceive objects, there is a light in the heart which enables us to perceive the wisdom of Allah which is embodied in this universe. We achieve that perception when we meditate on Allah's creation, in its motion and at rest. At-Tirmidhi uses the "heart" as a term referring to everything inside us in some traditions, the heart is compared to a king, ruling over the body or a lamp lighting the body. See at-Tirmidhi, *Bayan al-Farq Bayna al-Sadr Wa`l qalb Wa`l fu`ad wa`l llub* ed. By Nichola Heir (Beirut, Dar al - Jil, 1992- and *ar-Risala al-Qushairiyya*, p. 12 ash-Sha`arani, *al-Tabaqat*, p. 64.
2. D. 110 AH - 728 AC.

scholars will be weighed against the blood of the martyrs and the ink will be found to be the heavier."[1]

Ibn Mas`ud said, "You should acquire knowledge before it is taken away by Allah." The taking away of knowledge means the death of its possessor by Allah in whose hand my life lies, when He brings people back to life on the Day of Resurrection, the martyrs will wish that Allah had brought them back as scholars, when they see the great honor paid to scholars.

Ibn `Abbas said, "I would rather stay awake part of the night exchanging and discussing knowledge than spend the whole night in prayer. Abu Hurairah and Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal also reported the same thought in the same terms.

Al-Hasan said, as a comment on Allah's saying, "O Allah! Give us good in this world and in the world to come!"[2] that the good that Allah gives in this world is knowledge and worship. The good in the Hereafter is Paradise."

It was once said to a wise man, "Which of your possessions do you most treasure?" He replied, "That thing which will float with you even if your boat capsizes: that is knowledge."

It is said that this image of the capsizing of the ship meant the destruction of his body by death.

One of the scholars said that anyone who takes knowledge or wisdom as his reins would be taken by the people to be their ruler. Anyone who is known for his wisdom will always be regarded with respect.

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1. The words here in brackets have already occurred above in a *hadith*. Here al-Hasan al-Basri has added a comment of his own, although the sense is possibly already implied in the *hadith*. It is an indication of the high regard paid to knowledge by Muslim scholars.
2. Al-Baqarqah: 201.

Imam ash-Shafi`i said, "It is a sign of the value of knowledge that anyone who is credited with the slightest bit of knowledge is happy for that reason, and anybody who is accused of ignorance, is made very unhappy."

`Umar Ibn al-Khattab said, "O people! Take care to acquire knowledge. For Allah the Almighty, this is clothing pleasing to His sight. Anyone who seeks any branch of knowledge is given this clothing by Allah. When he commits a sin, Allah asks him three times to repent, or else he will take away those clothes and he will persist in this sin until his death.[1]

Al-Ahnaf[2] said, "Scholars are close to being gods. Any honor which is not based on knowledge turns to humiliation." And Salim Ibn Abu al-Ja`d[3] said, "My master purchased me as a slave, for only 300 *dirham*, and then he released me. I wondered what occupation to take up so I chose to acquire knowledge. It was a little less than one year later when the ruler of al-Madinah[4] came to visit me and I refused him entry.

Al-Zubayr Ibn Abu Bakr[5] said, "My father wrote to me from Iraq: "Take care to acquire knowledge because if you

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1. This is obviously a figure of speech. The clothes represent the respect and love which Allah gives to the scholar. When Allah withdraws the "clothes" of his respect and love the scholar is indistinguishable from the ignorant.
2. Sakhr Ibn Qays. D.c. 67 AH - 686 AC.
3. C. 100 A.H. - 719 AC.
4. A town in Arabia to which the Prophet (pbuh) and the Companions migrated from Makkah, and which became the residence of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It was the capital of the Muslim state both under the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his first caliphs. The former Arabic name of the town was Yathrib, and both names appear in the Qur'an. (Qur'an; 9:101, 120, 33: 60, 63: 8, 33:13). The town is known also as Madinat al-Rasul (The town of the Prophet). Madina is situated in the Hijaz on a plain sloping very gently towards the North.
5. D. 256 A.H. 869 AC.

become poor it will be a valuable asset, and if you become rich it will be an ornament for you".

The following is reported as Luqman's[1] advice to his son. He said, "O my son! Sit with scholars even if you have to squeeze in between them, because Allah the Almighty gives life

1. Luqman is a Qur`anic figure. His life and his background is not known to us. He appears in the Qur'an as a wholly devoted and a wise person, after whose name the *sura* number thirty one is called. He appears only in this *sura* of the Qur'an. In the Arabic tradition he stands as a perfect educator. In the Qur'an Allah the Almighty has revealed the set of advice Luqman taught his son.(see *surat* Luqman; 13-19). According to the Arab tradition he is associated with a long life. He was a hero. He was the first to punish adultery by stoning and robbery by cutting the hand off. Muslim scholars differ to identify the nature of the role he played in life. Some thought that he was a prophet and some regarded him as just a sage, but the majority of scholars are in favour of the latter. (Ibn Kathir, *Mukhtasr Tafsir,* vol. 3 - p. 64). The writer of the entry "Luqman" in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, considers Luqman as "... a legendary figure of the period of Arab paganism, and he assumed that Luqman as such was adopted into the Qur'an and later legend and poetry, and that "Muhammad introduces Luqman as a sage who utters various pious admonitions. The same writer casts doubt on the authenticity and divine nature of the Qur'an by saying, "The latter admonitions and proverbs latter do not bear the stamp of Luqman nor of Muhammad, but belong to the common stock of proverbial sayings. A characteristic example is the following "if all the trees on the earth were pens, and if Allah were to swell the sea into seven seas of ink, the words of Allah would not be exhausted "(Luqman: 27). He comments on this verse by saying, "This powerful hyperbole is found in hundreds of variants". Luqman's admonition, 'Moderate thy pace, lower thy voice, for of all voices, that of the ass is most hateful'. Also in the same *sura*, verse 19 also referred back by the same writer to a non-divine source, to be *sura* he refers to Rendel Harres, who had found the model of this advice in Akhikar, "Lower thy head, speak quietly and look down! For if a house could be built by a loud voice, the ass would build two houses in a day". In his view it was Muhammad who "had consecrated Luqman as the wise utterer of proverbs". (see Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, p. 289). The writer of the entry is totally wrong to trace the Qur'an back to obscure human sources which cannot in any sense bare the divine majesty of the Qur'an nor undermine it. The writer moreover uses totally unsuitable word to translate the Qur'anic verse, "*Wa-l-bahr Yamuduhu*". He translated it into "to swell the sea into seven seas".

to the heart by the light of wisdom, just as he gives life to the earth by rain from the skies."

Another wise man said, "When a scholar dies, the whale in the sea cries out in the water, and the birds in the air cry out too. His face will be missed but his name remains on everybody's lips". Al-Zuhry, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "Knowledge is a serious thing and is acquired only by serious people."[1]

Merits of Learning

Evidence from the Qur'an

Allah says,

﴾*If a group from each people remained behind, they could devote themselves to the study of religion.*﴿

(At-Taubah: 122)

﴾*If you do not know, then ask those who do know, from the book."*

(Yunus: 94)

Evidence from the *Sunnah*

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"If a man is looking for the way to acquire knowledge Allah guides him to a path that leads to Paradise." [2]

1. This statement of al-Zuhri`s is translated somewhat freely but in a way that is true to its sense.
2. Reported by Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayrah.

"Angels spread their wings for joy and satisfaction with the seeker after knowledge."[1]

"To rise at dawn and learn something worthwhile is better than to pray one hundred prayers."[2]

"If a man learns one chapter of knowledge, it is better than the world and everything in it."[3]

"Seek knowledge even if it is as far as a field as China."[4]

"The seeking of knowledge is the duty of every Muslim, (both male and female)."

"Knowledge is a treasure - house and the key that opens it is the question."

Therefore, you should always be asking questions, and this will benefit four different people: you (the seeker after knowledge), the learned person, anyone who is listening to you both, and finally, the lover of each of these.[5]

He also said (pbuh),

"An ignorant man should not remain silent about his ignorance, nor should a learned man remain silent about his knowledge."[6]

Abu Dharr said that to attend an assembly listening to a learned man is better than to pray one thousand units of prayer,

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1. Reported by Ahmad, Ibn Hibban and al-Hakim.
2. Reported by Ibn `Abd al-Barr.
3. Reported by Ibn Hibban.
4. Reported by al-Bayhaqi.
5. Abu Na`im ascribes this *hadith* to `Ali.
6. Reported by at-Tabarani.

better than to visit one thousand sick people, better than to attend one thousand funerals.

> *"Anyone who seeks knowledge with the purpose of reviving Islam, and dies in the search, will be only one step away from the prophets in Paradise."*[1]

Sayings of the Wise Men

Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both) said, "When I was seeking knowledge, I was humbled, but when people came to me seeking knowledge, I was honored."

Ibn Abi Mulayka said, "I never saw a man like Ibn `Abbas. Anyone who saw him was looking at the best of faces; anyone who heard him was listening to the most articulate of people and when he passed judgment on any matter you heard the most learned man speaking."

Ibn Al-Mubarak said, "I'm wondering about some one who is not searching for knowledge. How can he reach an honorable state?"

A certain wise man said, "I never feel pity as much as I do for two kinds of people:

First, those who seek knowledge but do not understand it; secondly, those who can understand knowledge but do not seek it."

Abu al-Darda' said, "To learn one fact is better than to spend the whole night in prayer. The learned man and his pupil are sharing in a virtuous action. The other people, the common folk, are without virtue."

1. Reported by ad-Darimi and Ibn as-Sunni.

He also said, "One should endeavor to become a learned man, or a student, or someone who listens to them, but nothing else; anything else would put you in danger."

`Ata' said, "Attending an assembly to listen to a learned man takes away the sins of seventy visits to dens of iniquity."

`Umar Ibn al-Khattab said, "If one thousand people who pray all night and fast all day should all die, that would be a lesser calamity that the death of one learned man, who knows that which is lawful and that which is unlawful in the eyes of Allah."

Imam Ash-Shafi`i[1] said, "To seek knowledge is better than praying extra or supererogatory prayers."

Ibn Abd al-Hakam[2], may Allah be pleased with him, said, "I was with Malik (ibn Anas), learning from him; it came to the time for midday prayer, I collected all my books and put them aside to pray. Then he said to me, "O you there! What you are standing up to do is not better in itself than what you were sitting down to do. It is a matter as to whether it is done with a good intention."

Abu ad-Darda' said, "To rise at dawn and to go to seek knowledge is the same as fighting a holy war, anyone who says, it is not a must to be stupid."

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1. Al-Shafi`I, Muhammad ibn Idris al-Qurashi, died in 204 AH (820AD). He is the founder of the Shafi`i *Madhhab*, school of jurisprudence, and to a great extent he is the originator of principles of Jurisprudence, *Usul al-Fiqh*. He is a polymath and poet, ascetic and noble in character. He lived yet but a short time, but left a huge number of writings behind. (see al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad*, Cairo 1349 AH, vol. 2, pp. 56-73).

2. D. 214 AH - 829 AC.

Merits of Teaching

Evidence from the Qur'an

Allah, Most High, says,

"And warn or admonish their people who fought the war when they return to them that they may consciously guard themselves against evil."[1]

(At-Tawbah: 122)

This verse refers to teaching and guidance.

Allah, Most High, says,

"Remember when Allah took a covenant from the People of the Book[2] *you shall make it clearly known to the people, and not conceal it."*

(Al `Imran: 187)

This shows that teaching is an obligation.

Allah says,

"There is a party of them (Jews and Christians) conceal the truth although they certainly know it."

(Al-Baqarah: 146)

This shows that it is against Allah's law to conceal the truth, as Allah says when speaking about giving witness,

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1. A part of this verse is quoted by al-Ghazali to demonstrate the excellence of learning.
2. The People of the Book is a Qur'anic designation for the Jews and the Christians. It may also include the Magian.

"And do not conceal the testimony for whoever conceals it his heart is heavily burdened with sin."

(Al-Baqarah: 283)

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Before Allah gives knowledge to a scholar, He makes him promise, just as He made the prophets promise, that they will pass the knowledge on to the people, and explain it and not conceal it."[1]

Allah says,

﴾ *Who speaks more perfectly than he who calls people to the way of Allah, and does the righteous acts.* ﴿

(Fussilat: 33)

﴾ *Call (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and kind admonition and argue with them in the best of manner.* ﴿

(Al-Nahl: 125)

﴾ *And teach them the Book and the wisdom.* ﴿[2]

(Al-Baqarah: 129)

Evidence from the *Sunnah*

When Mu`adh was setting out on a journey to Yemen, the Prophet (pbuh) said to him,

"If Allah gives guidance to someone through your agency

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1. Reported by Abu Nu`aim in the section on the merits of the virtuous scholar.
2. The verse in full refers to the Prophet Abraham's prayers to Allah that He may send the Prophet Muhammad to teach the Arabs and the nations the word of Allah, i.e. the Qur'an and the wisdom, i.e. the sunnah. Muhammad's tradition and to purify their souls from paganism, atheism and ignorance.

that is a thing that is better than the whole world and everything that is in it."[1]

Moreover, he (pbuh) said,

"If anyone learns a section of knowledge in order to teach it to the people, he will be rewarded on a scale equivalent to seventy righteous men."[2]

Jesus[3] said, "Anyone who keeps the law and teaches others

1. This *hadith* appears in al-Ghazali's works.
2. Ibn Masnsur al-Daylami in *Musnad al-Firdaws* from Ibn `Umar
3. See Mathew's Gospel 5:19, and at-Tirmidhi's Ilm, p. 19. The Qur'an talks in length about Jesus. It covers his life from cradle to accension. The Qur'an gives a greater number of hounourable designations to Jesus than to any other figure in the past. The Qur'an calls him a 'sign', a 'mercy', (Al-Ma'idah: 117; Al `Imran: 59). He is called by his proper name Isa, the Messiah eleven times and the son of Mary twenty times, and by the names Messenger, Prophet, Servant of Allah, Word, and Spirit from Allah. The Qur'an gives two statements of the annunciation and birth of Jesus, and mentions many of Jesus' words and miracles and his death and ascension (the possibility of Jesus being crucified is excluded in the Qur'an). Three *suras* of the Qur'an (3; 5; 19) are named after matters related to him. Jesus is mentioned in fifteen *suras* and ninety-three verses. As a mighty Prophet, Jesus is always depicted in high terms, in nowhere in the Qur'an, Jesus is said to be a son of Allah or a divine being. To illustrate this, Allah says in the Qur'an, "The Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, is only the Messenger of Allah, and his word which he cast upon Mary and a Spirit from him." (An-Nisa': 169-171) The "Messiah will not disdain to be a Servant of Allah." (An-Nisa': 170-172). After the Qur'an established the human nature and the prophethood of Jesus and the way he was born, Allah said, "That is Jesus, Son of Mary, a statement of the truth, the way that Mary conceived her baby and the way that Jesus was created in her womb without the evolvement of male factor was not a sign of Divinity in Jesus but a sign of Allah's might and wisdom. Allah says, " We made her and her son a sign to the world." (Al-Anbiya'; 91; Al-Mu'minun: 52)

   Allah tells us that it was Jesus' mission to call people to worship Allah alone not him, Jesus worked miracles by the leave of Allah, but not of his own accord or authority. The Qur'an tells us that Jesus fortold the coming of Muhammad (pbuh) (Al-Saff: 6). For furter deatails, see Abu Layla, *the Qur'an and the Gospels*, Geoffrey Oparrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'an*, Oxford, England, One world publications, 1996, pp. 16 ff. and 96 ff.

to do so will stand high in the kingdom of heaven."

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will say to the worshipers and the warriors: you shall enter Paradise, then the scholars will say, "You worshipped and fought because we taught you our knowledge. Then Allah will say, "You are like some of my angels; if you intercede, your intercession will be accepted. So they will intercede for each other and enter Paradise."

The scholars will be awarded this rank on the account of the knowledge they passed on to others, not because of the knowledge they accumulated but did not share with others.

The Prophet (pbuh) also said,

"Allah will not take knowledge away from men after He has given it to them. Rather, he will take it away when the learned men die. Whenever a learned man dies, all his knowledge will die with him, until there will be nothing left but ignorant rulers. Whenever they are asked anything, their decisions will not be based on any knowledge; as a result these misguided rulers will lead others astray.' [1]

"If a man acquires knowledge but keeps it concealed, Allah will drag him along in a bridle of fire on the Day of Judgment."[2]

"What an excellent gift, what an excellent present is a word of wisdom which you hear and memorize and carry in your

1. Reported by `Abdullah Ibn `Amr.
2. Reported by Abu Dawud.

head to teach it to your fellow Muslim, doing this is the equivalent of worshipping for a whole year."[1]

"The world and everything in it is accursed except for a person who is mindful of the glories of Allah, makes friends with Him or teaches and learns."[2]

"Anyone who teaches virtue to his own people is beloved by Allah, by His angels both in heaven and on earth, even by the ant in its nest and the fish in the sea, and they all pray for him."[3]

"A Muslim can give to his fellow Muslim no greater benefit than the knowledge of the tradition which has been passed on to him and he now passes it on to another."[4]

"If a believer hears good advice and acts upon it, it is better than worshipping for a whole year."[5]

The Prophet (pbuh) once went out and saw two crowds of people. One crowd was calling upon Allah and offering supplications to Him. The other group was giving people sound teaching. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"The first group is offering supplications to Allah which He may grant if He wishes or reject if wishes. The other group is giving people sound teaching. I myself have been sent to be a teacher. He went to the teachers and sat down among them."[6]

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1. Reported by at-Tabarani.
2. Reported by at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah.
3. Reported by at-Tirmidhi.
4. Reported by Ibn `Abd al-Barr.
5. Reported by Ibn al-Mubark in his book *al-Zuhd.*
6. Reported by Ibn Majah.

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Allah sent me with guidance and knowledge; it is like heavy rain falling on a certain area, one part of the land absorbed the rain, and the crops and grasses that grew there flourished. In another place there were ditches and canals to store the rainwater, and the men there benefited from Allah's gift. They could drink it, irrigate the fields and grow crops. Then there was another place which did not store the water, and neither grass nor herbs grew there."(1)

The first kind of land the Prophet (pbuh) gave for a man who draws benefit from his knowledge. The second is for a man who gives benefit to others. The third place is for a man who neither draws benefit himself nor passes the benefit on the others.

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"When a man dies all his actions stop, except three:

1- constant charity contribution,

2- His knowledge that has benefited other people,

3- Good sons or daughters to pray for him." (2)

"Any one who guides someone towards something good is equal to the person who does the good deed."(3)

"You should not feel envy, except towards two kinds of people. First, towards a man to whom Allah has given knowledge, who lives according to it, and teaches it to the people.

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1. Reported by Abu Musa.
2. Reported by Muslim.
3. Reported by at-Tirmidhi.

Secondly, towards a man to whom Allah has given great wealth to spend, and Allah inspires him to spend it on good causes."[1]

"May Allah's mercy be on my heirs." People asked, "Who are your heirs?" "Those who love my way of life (Sunnah), and teach it to Allah's people."[2]

Sayings of the Companions

`Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Anyone who learns a *hadith*, and acts according to it, and leads someone else to act according to it, will be rewarded as mush as the one who did the deed."

Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both) said, "If a man teaches virtue to people, everything will seek forgiveness for him, even the whale in the sea."

A certain wise man said, "A learned man stands as an intermediary between Allah and His people. He should give careful thought to his position as an intermediary."

It is reported that Sufyan al-Thawri[3] (may Allah be pleased with him) went to Askalan. During his stay there nobody asked him any questions. Then he said, "Hire me an animal to ride away from this place. This is a place where knowledge is dying. He said this out of concern that the virtue of learning and knowledge should remain alive.

`Ata' said, "Once I came across Sa`id Ibn Al-Musayyab, I saw that he was weeping. I asked, "What has made you cry?" He said, "No body has asked me about anything."

1. Agrred upon *hadith*.
2. Reported by Ibn `Abd al-Barr.
3. Abu `Abdullah Sufyan al-Thawri Ibn Sa`id (d. 161 AH - 777 AC).

A learned man said, "Learned men are the lamp of their age. Each one is a light (torch) for his own time, giving light for the people of his time."

Al-Hasan[1] said, "If it were not for learned men, people would be nothing but animals." This means that it is knowledge that distinguishes humans from animals."

`Ikriama[2] said, "Knowledge has a price." People asked him, "What is that price?" he said, "You have to pass it on to someone else who is worthy to carry it and who will guard it well and not waste it."

Yahya Ibn Mu`adh[3] said, "The scholars have shown more mercy (been kinder) to Muhammad's nation than their own fathers and mothers did. People asked, "How can this be true?" He said, "This is because their fathers and mothers protected them from the dangers of this world, but the scholar protect them from the eternal fires in the Hereafter."

It is said that the beginning of knowledge is silence, then listening, then memorizing, then repeating, and then spreading the knowledge to others.

It is also said, "Give your knowledge to anyone who is ignorant. Take knowledge from anyone who knows something that you do not. If you do that, you will have learnt something new, and you can remember it and keep it in your possession."

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1. Abu Sa`id al-Hasan Ibn Abi al-Hasan al-Bisri (d. 110 AH - 728 AC).
2. `Ikrima, the servant of Ibn `Abbas (d. c. 105 AH - 723 AC).
3. Yahya Ibn Mu`adh ar-Razi (d. 258 AH - 871 AC).

The Prophet (pbuh) said, as reported by Mu'adh Ibn Jabal[1],

> *"Acquire knowledge because its acquisition is equal to fear of Allah; seeking wisdom is equal to worshiping; studying is equal to praise, the search for knowledge is like fighting a holy war; teaching an ignorant person is equal to alms giving; sharing knowledge with worthy people brings merit."*

Knowledge is your friend on a journey, your companion in solitude, your guide to religion, a light in both happiness and misfortune, a bosom friend to a stranger and a beacon on the path to Paradise. Through knowledge, Allah exalts a nation, making its people into leaders, guides on to the path of virtue, and others follow them. The angels wish to be their friends, and brush them with their wings. Each thing, whether dead and dry or fresh and living, seeks forgiveness for them, even the whale in the sea, insects and worms, beasts in the jungle, cattle and sheep, even the stars in the sky seek forgiveness for them. Knowledge brings life to a dead heart, it is a light in the darkness for our eyes. It gives strength to the body and removes weakness. Knowledge helps a man to attain the highest position among the ranks of the pious. To think of knowledge is equal to fasting, and to study is equal to praying at night. Knowledge helps us to obey Allah and to Worship Allah; it helps us by warning us. It helps us by explaining that there is only one God. It remains the ties of blood and helps us to understand what is lawful and what is unlawful. Knowledge is our guide, and deeds follow it. Allah inspires it in the fortunate, and withholds it from the unfortunate. We ask Allah for the best of guidance.

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1. Mu`adh Ibn Jabal al-Khazraji (d. c. 18 AH - 639 AC).

Evidence from Reason, Intellectual Demonstration

You should know that the purpose of this chapter is to explain the excellence of knowledge, and how precious it is. If excellence in itself is not recognized and its purpose is not defined, it is impossible to know whether it applies to knowledge or to anything else.

Anyone, who tries to define whether, for example, Zayd is wise, will lose his way unless he understands the concept and nature of wisdom.

Fadila[1] comes from *Al-Fadl*, "increase", so there are else connotations of "extra" and "greater". If two things share a quality but one has more of it, we say that it is superior in this respect; it may not be perfect, but it has "more" of this quality than the other.

A horse can be said to be superior to a donkey. If they are compared for their load bearing capacity, there is not difference, but a horse has qualities that are lacking in a donkey. It can run fast, turn and gallop. It is physically beautiful. We choose an animal for its other qualities, not just for how much it can carry.

Now you should understand why knowledge is an "excellent" thing. A horse is considered to excel a donkey, because it has the extra quality of moving very quickly. Similarly, knowledge excels other qualities. It is excellent in itself.

If there were such a thing as a donkey that possessed an exceptional physique, it still could not be said that it was

1. The translation is somewhat free here in order to convey the meaning mor clearly to the English reader. In Arabic, *Fadila* means "virtue" or "excellence". We translate it here as "excellence" but it should be noted that it carries connotations of "virtue" in every case.

superior to a horse. It would only be a clever donkey, or an unusually large donkey. It would not possess the quality of being a horse, and could not be regarded as an "excellent" beast.

An animal is chosen to suit a certain purpose; it is chosen for the qualities it possesses by nature, not for its particular physique. If you understand this, you will not find it difficult to grasp that knowledge is "excellent" when compared with all other qualities, just as the horse is excellent in comparison with all other animals. However, the horse's attribute of speedy movement is excellent, but not in an absolute sense. In contrast, knowledge is excellent in itself, absolutely without qualification.

This is because knowledge is the perfect attribute of Allah the Almighty, and He bestows it as honor on His angels and prophets. Even in the case of horses, an intelligent horse is better than a stupid one. This shows that knowledge is excellent in the absolute sense, without qualification.

Another thing that you need to know is that the things which are considered precious, and that every body want to possess, can be divided into categories:

1- Things that are desired as a means to an end,

2- Things that are desired for their own sake,

3- Things that are desired both for their own sake and as a means to an end.

Things that are desired for their own sake are nobler than things that are desired as a means to an end.

Something that is desired only as a means to an end is money and golden coins and dinars. They have no value in themselves,

only for what they can buy. If Allah, the Almighty had not made gold and silver into coins they would not have had more value than other metals.

Something that is desired for its own sake is happiness in the life to come the joy of gazing upon Allah's face for all eternity.[1]

Something that is desired both for itself and for another reason is physical health, because a strong body is necessary to keep one from pain, and to allow one to achieve ones purposes and satisfy one's needs.

Knowledge is desired for itself alone, because it brings us joy. It is also a means to an end, because it brings us closer to the Almighty and allows us to achieve happiness in the life to come.

Nothing can bring us to Allah except knowledge. The highest-ranking thing that a man could ever achieve is everlasting happiness. The best of things is the one that serves as the means of obtaining this. We cannot achieve everlasting happiness without knowledge, and actions based on that knowledge. We can act only on the basis of knowing how to act. The basis of happiness in this world and in the world to come is knowledge. It is therefore the best of human occupations. Is it not?

The virtue of something is known by its fruit. The fruit of knowledge is to draw near to the Lord of all being, to reach the

1. The reader should be warned against the literal translation of "Alah's face". Allah has no physical body and is absolutely different from anything imaginable by the human mind. He is above time, space and matter. "To gaze upon Allah's face" is a theological concept used by Muslim scholars in connection with a phrase in the Qur'an (Al-Qiyamah: 23) "Gazing at Allah's face" means looking in a direction that Allah chooses, coming closer to Him in this way, which will bring joy to your heart such as you have never known.

position of angels, and enjoy the highest of all positions, near Allah, in the world to come. And in this world you will win nobility and reverence and the power to pass judgment even upon kings, and the natural respect which is paid to knowledgeable people, just as stupid people and illiterates among the Turks and Arabs naturally revere and respect their elders, because of their greater experience of life. And even beasts naturally revere man, sensing that he is superior to them in degree.

This is the high status of knowledge in the absolute. There are also the many branches of knowledge, the various sciences, which differ from each other, as we shall see later, and the excellence of each varies according to its nature. As for the virtue of knowledge and teaching, this is clear from what has been said already. If knowledge is the best of all things, then the getting of it, and the passing on of it in teaching, are ways of reaping the benefits of the best of all things.

To make this clear, let us say that human striving can be divided into religious matters and worldly matters. Religion cannot be well-ordered unless this world is well-ordered, because this world is the vehicle for the Hereafter. Knowledge is the way that takes us to Allah the Almighty. It is the means for anyone who desires to find Him.

Knowledge is not for those who regard this world as their setting place and permanent home. The world can only be set in order by people's work and efforts. The work crafts and labor undertaken by people can be divided into three kinds:

1- The basic activities which sustain and regulate human life; agriculture for the production of food, textile manufacture for

clothing, building for shelter, and good management for public order.

2- Secondary activities support the basic activities; iron, working provides tools for agriculture and for carding and spinning.

3- Supplementary activities and refinements make improvements to basic survival: for example, grinding grain, baking, embroidery, fancy sewing. These are in addition to the things that are necessary to a well-regulated life on earth.

We may draw a comparison with man and the organs of his body. They may also be divided into three categories:

A- The essential organs: heart and brain

B- Secondary component such as arteries and veins, nerves and blood cells.

C- Extra refinements, such as nails, fingers, eyebrows. The "best" in these categories are the basic ones mentioned above. The best of the basic categories is good government, which organizes the people in peace and harmony.

To achieve this, the art of politics requires more skill than any other human activity. It is to be more effective, because the politician or governor is controlling all other activities.

Politics concerns itself with the betterment of people's lives and guiding them on the best path to safeguard them in this world and lead them to happiness in the next.

There are four classes of administration:

1- The first class is the highest; it is the government of the prophets and their jurisdiction over people both the common folk and the elite in matters both public and private.

2- The rule of the temporal rulers, heirs to the prophet-caliphs, kings and sultans over the people both the common folk and the elite with regard to public matters but not private.

3- The rule of the devout scholars and wise men who have knowledge of Allah and His commands as they are the heirs of the prophets. Their authority is exercised over the inner life only of the elect, since the common people do not have the understandings to benefit from it. Their authority cannot be stretched to regulate their outward activities by force or by obstruction or by law.

4- The rule of the preachers. This involves the thoughts of the common people only.

The government of the prophets is the most noble of the four, but right after comes the diffusion of knowledge and the teaching of morals which saves people from blameworthy and destructive activities and leads them towards praiseworthy morality, which brings them happiness. This is the purpose of knowledge and education.

Intellectual activities are superior to other activities, because the excellence of an activity is known by three things:

1- By seeing which part of a man is used for the activity. For example, getting knowledge is superior to learning a language, because knowledge is acquired by mind but a language only by ear. The mind is superior to the ear. So knowledge is better than language, since knowledge is attained through the intellect, while language through the sense of hearing.

2- By seeing how essential the activity is for human survival. For example, agriculture is superior to goldsmiths work.

3- By seeing how skilled the activity is. For example, a goldsmiths work is more skilled than a tanner. Knowledge is seen to be excellent in each of these three ways:

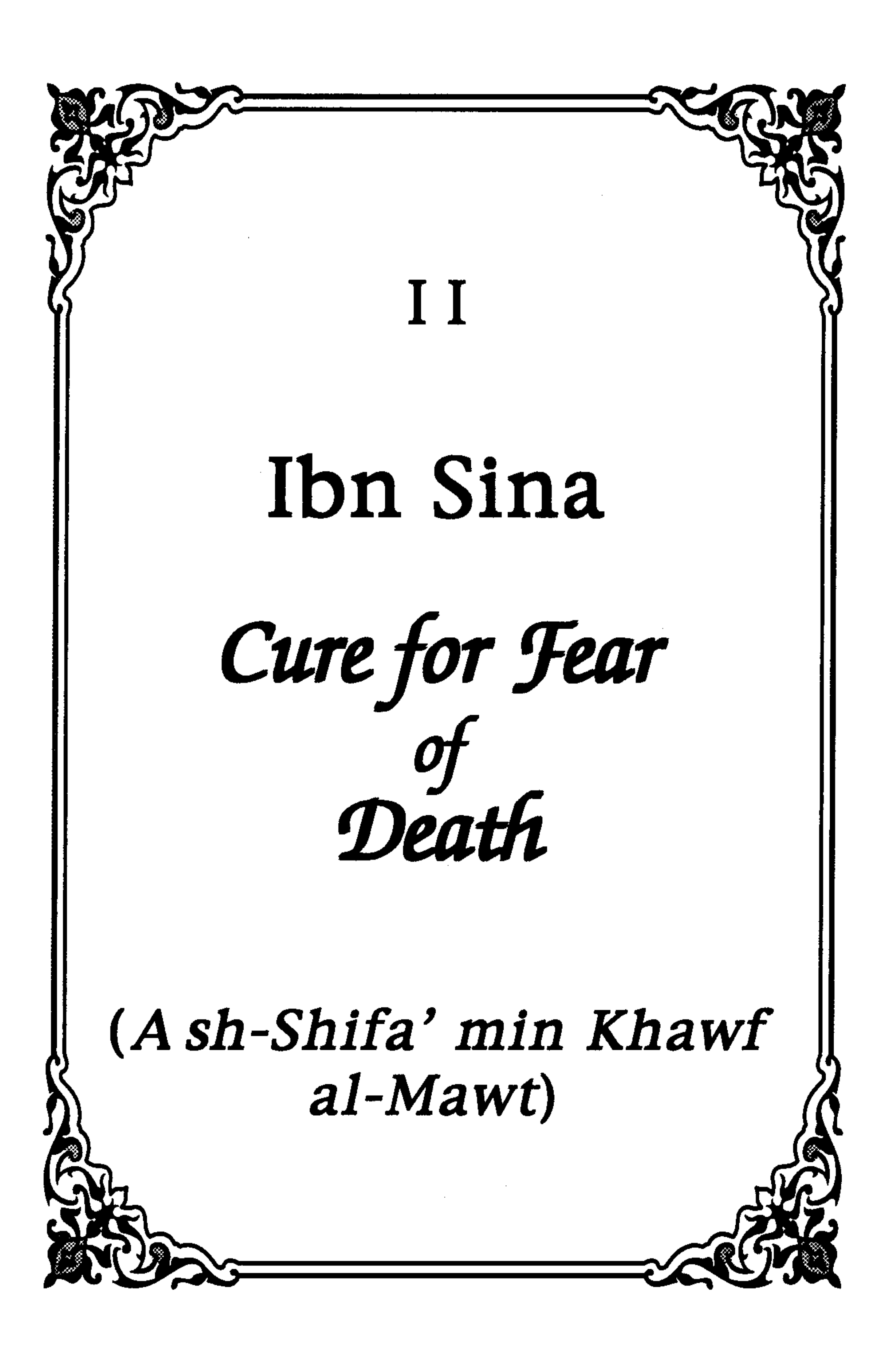
A- It is widely known that religious knowledge provides the path to Paradise. Perfect knowledge and a bright mind can reach heaven. These are most noble attributes of man because they have enabled him to trust Allah and to enjoy the neighborhood of Allah.

B- There is not doubt that knowledge benefits people because it has many practical uses and its fruit is happiness in this world and the next.

C- It is clear that the teacher can control the hearts and the souls of the people. The noblest creature on the face of the earth is man, and the most excellent part of the man is the heart and the soul and purifying them and bringing them near to Allah the Almighty. This shows that disseminating knowledge is on the one hand an act of worship towards the Almighty Allah, and on the other hand, it is an act, which enforces Allah's authority on earth. This is the noblest part of exercising Allah's caliphate on earth. This is because Allah has opened the heart of the learned man to the divine knowledge that is His own most perfect attribute.

The teacher stands like a treasurer looking after Allah's most precocious investments. He is permitted to spend from it, giving to all who are in need of it. What higher rank can there be than

that of intermediary between Allah and men, bringing his fellows closer to Allah and Paradise? Allah counts us among them, because of His great generosity. May Allah send peace to convey man chosen by Him.



II

Ibn Sina

Cure for Fear of Death

(*Ash-Shifa' min Khawf al-Mawt*)

Preface

Ibn Sina's Life

Ibn Sina, Abu `Ali al-Husayn Ibn `Abdullah Ibn `Ali, was born in 370 AH - 980 AC near Bukhara, and spent the early part of his life there. He is called Ash-Shaikh and he is also called Ar-Rais.

He wrote about himself saying, "My father was a man from Balkh but he moved to Bukhara during the days of of Ibn Mansur. He was the Treasury officer of Bukhara. My father brought me a teacher to teach me the Qur'an and another to teach me literature. When I was ten, I committed the Qur'an to memory. I also memorized many pieces of literature so much that people were amazed."

From youth, if not childhood, Ibn Sina enjoyed a high sense of intelligence and intellectual independence. He talks about himself, saying, "My father had met an Egyptian Isla`milite instructor. He heard him talking about the soul and mind according to their own thought.

My brother was also influenced by my father in this aspect. They perhaps studied together and exchanged views about it, but I was never inclined to it. My father and my brother went further along this line to follow Ism`ailite footsteps.[1]

Ibn Sina gives further details about his teachers and the way he studied philosophy. He said that Abu `Abdullah Annaili,

1. About the Isma`ili movement and its spread in the Muslim countries see Ibn al-Nadim, *al-fihmist* (Beirut, Dar al-Ma`rifa) pp. 264-268.

whom he considered as a father, taught him philosophy. Ibn Sina said that he read many books on logic and other such related books at Abu `Abdullah Annaili's feet.

Ibn Sina says that before Annaili's arrival at Bukhara he was engaged in learning Islamic Jurisprudence from sheik Ism`ail az-Zahid. Ibn Sina says about himself that he was one of the most serious students in this field to the point that he wrote some articles on Jurisprudence following the methodology of the jurists. He read intensively in many different fields of knowledge.

Ibn Sina said, "I kept on learning and investigating until doors began to open to me. I then moved on to read medicine. The medical profession was not one of the difficult branches of knowledge. Within a short time I became a unique physician. The noble students of medicine began to learn from me. I treated the sick and, by this way, I carried out experiments and made new discoveries unattainable to others. At the same time I had been attending classes of jurisprudence and participating in debates on jurisprudential matters. At that time I was only sixteen. I had been reading day and night. I could hardly sleep at night, or busy myself with anything but learning during the day. I continued this way for one and half year. My mind was preoccupied with learning so much that I memorized texts and solved problems even while asleep. Everything I learned in my youth is as vivid today as if I had learned it only yesterday."

Ibn Sina also said that he faced some difficulties in understanding Aristotle's metaphysics and he had to read it forty times until he memorized it. However he was never able to assimilate it until he accidentally found a book by Abu Nasr

Al-Farabi (d. 950 AC - 339 AH) which explained Aristotle's book. Ibn Sina was so happy because this enabled him to understand the book that he distributed money to the poor as a thanksgiving to Allah. This is a direct acknowledgement of the influence of Al-Farabi on Ibn Sina.

Ibn Sina mentions in his autobiography that he had access to the royal library of Mansur Ibn Nuh; the Sultan of Bukhara. In this library he read many excellent and rare books hardly read by anyone else. At that time he was only eighteen years old.

He later said, "At that time, I was more able to memorize but now I am more able to understand and discover." This clearly shows that much of Ibn Sina's learning was gained by his own reading efforts, and personal efforts[1].

In short, Ibn Sina is a great philosopher, physician, Jurist, poet and a man of letters with a high sense of spirituality. His influence upon later Muslim and Western scholars is reverently acknowledged.

His book *al-Qanun* on medicine was translated into Latin in the twelfth century and was much in use more than the works of the Greek physicians Galen and Hippocrates. It prevailed over the teaching of medicine in the West until, at least, the end of the sixteenth century. There were sixteen printed editions of it in the fifteenth century; in Hebrew, twenty editions in the sixteenth, and several more in the seventeenth century.[2]

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1. Ibn Abi Usaybia, *Uyun al-Anba fi Tabaqat al-Atibba* (Beirut, Dar al-Thaqafa 1408 A.H. 1987 A.D) vol. 3, pp. 3-29 also W. Montgomery Watt, *The Majesty that was Islam*, (London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1976) pp. 229 f.
2. *The Majesty that Was Islam*, p. 228.

Ibn Sina's Literary Outcome

Ibn Sina is a prolific writer with great depth and power of originality. His writings cover many fields and areas of interest, in medicine he wrote *al-Qanun* as already referred to above, in philosophy he wrote ash-Shifa` (literary means 'healing'), *an-Najat* (literary means 'salvation'), *al-Isharat wa'l Tanbihat* (literary means notices and guidelines).

The latter book is the most important of all his philosophical works. Ibn Sina was so proud of it, so much so that he was keen not to teach it to less capable students[1]. Like all Muslim philosophers and scholars of the time, Ibn Sina wrote his articles in Arabic. Besides this he wrote a short Encyclopaedia in Persian which laid the foundations of philosophical literature in that language.[2]

Ibn Sina is widely acknowledged as the greatest writer on medicine and philosophy, Montgomery Watt observed, "His eminence in medicine was due to ability to combine extensive theoretical knowledge and systematic thought with a cute clinical observation."[3]

Richard Walzer viewed Ibn Sina's well-known books. Slightly different, he says, "Ibn Sina is a systematic thinker of the first class. His great and justly famous medical encyclopaedia, *al-Qanun*, is lacking in originality when

1. See al-Bayhaqi, *Tarikh Hukama al-Islam*, p. 35 also Hamuda Ghuraba, *Ibn Sina Bayna al-Din Wa'l Falsafa* (Cairo, Majma' al-Buhuth al-Islamiyya, 1392 AH - 1972 AC), pp. 45 f.
2. Gerhard Endress, *An introduction to Islam* , translated into English by Carole Hillenbrand (Edinbourgh university press), p. 143.
3. *The majesty that Was Islam* (London William Clowes and Sonstimited, 1976) p. 228.6

compared with Ar-Razi, but is deservedly celebrated for its clear and exhaustive and well-classified arrangement of the subject-matter.

It was very popular for centuries with Arabic, Persian and Latin doctors alike. The same systematic genius manifests itself in his great philosophical encyclopaedia ash-Shifa, in which he deals at length with all the philosophical, mathematical and natural sciences. No complete edition of the original text exists; some sections were translated into Latin.

An abbreviation of his great work *an-Najat* (salvation) is well-known, and was printed together with *al-Qanun*, the second Arabic work ever printed, in Rome in 593."(1)

He says, while talking about the real sense of "Going" *mawrjud*, and the common error about it "this is introduced to you and to anyone who is worthy of addressing.(2)

In this book, Ibn Sina treasured his life long experience, both intellectually and spiritually.

To conclude, there is still a striking fact about Ibn Sina and other Muslim philosophers and scientists in general this is the belief in the complete harmony between science, religion and politics. To have a well-balanced and secure life, the mind should be harnessed and guided by Divine Law and values. If knowledge, the product of mind, is separated from faith, life altogether will grow wild and turn into ruin. Man will then be the victim of his own work and device.

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1. *Greek into Arabic*, Oxford, Btuno Cassirer LID, 962, p. 24.
2. See *al-Isharat wa'l Tambihat*, explained by Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, ed. By Dr. Sulayman Dunya, 1955, part 3 p.6

Before we deal with Ibn Sina's epistle on the fear of death and how to overcome it, it is highly instructive to note that death is a very clear fact. Righteous people not only accept this fact but also they work and prepare for it.

By remembering death we improve and deepen our morality and spirituality. Everyone in this world is like a traveler who move from place to place until he reaches his final destiny.

Allah says,

﴿*... and that it is He who makes to laugh, and that makes to weep, and that it is He who makes to die, and that makes to live.*﴾

(An-Najm: 39)

﴿*Say: 'Surely death, from which you flee, shall encounter you; then you shall be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the visible, and He will tell you what you were doing.*﴾

(Al-Jum`ah: 8)

﴿*Every soul shall taste death, then unto Us you shall be returned.*﴾

(Luqman: 35)

﴿*Every soul shall taste death; you shall surely be paid in full your wages on the Day of Resurrection. Whosoever is removed from the Fire. And admitted to Paradise, shall win the triumph. The present life is but the joy of delusion.*﴾

(Al `Imran: 185)

﴿*...The likeness of them is as the likeness of a man who kindled a fire, and when it lit all about him Allah took away their light, and left them in darkness unseeing, deaf, dumb, blind so they shall not return; or as a cloudburst out of*

heaven in which is darkness, and thunder, and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps, fearful of death and Allah encompasses the unbelievers. ﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 19)

In this context, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) says,

"Remember often the Ender (or the destroyer) of pleasures."[1]

Imam al-Ghazali comments on this *Hadith*, saying, "Make pleasures distasteful thereby, until your inclination towards them is broken and you devote yourselves to Allah (Exalted is He!).[2]

Ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) says, "I once came to the Prophet (peace be upon him), in a group of ten people. A man from among the Helpers (*al-Ansar*) asked (the Prophet), "Who is the most intelligent and noble among men, O messenger of Allah? And He said, "The most diligent in recalling death, and the one who is best is best prepared to it. Such is the intelligent one, who have gained the honor of this world and the dignity of the next."[3]

Remembering death tenders our heart and helps us to draw close to Allah, Once a woman complained to the mother of believers `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) of the hardness of her heart. “Remember death frequently”, she told her, “and your heart will be softened.” Then she did, and her heart became soft. She went to thank `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her).[4]

1 Reported by At-Tirmidhi.

2 See *Ihya'*, vol. 4, p. 478

3 Reported by Ibn Majah.

4. *Ihya'*, vol. 4, 479.

People are heedless of death because hearts are preoccupied and engaged by desires and attractions of this world and that is why remembering death does not have salutary effect upon hearts. Man should think and remember that peers and associates have passed away before him and left every thing behind them. He should contemplate how their parts have been scattered in their tombs, how they made widows of their wives and orphans of their children; how they lost their property, how their mosques and gatherings have become void of them, how their very traces have been wiped away.

Allah says about Pharaoh and his people after their destruction,

> ﴿*They left how many gardens and fountains, sown fields, and how noble a station and what prosperity they had rejoiced in! Even so; and We bequeathed them upon another people. Neither heaven nor earth wept of them: nor were they given a respite (again)!*﴾
>
> (Ad-Dukhan: 25-29)

`Umar Ibn `Abdul-`Aziz once said to Anbsa, "Remember death abundantly, for if your life is easy it will make it hard, while if your life is hard it will make it easy."[1]

He also says, "Do you not see that each day, by morning and night, you bid farewell to a traveler to Allah (Great and Glorious is He!), setting him in a grave, who has taken the dust for his pillow, left his loved ones behind, and put himself apart from his means of subsistence."[2]

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1. Ibid, vol. 3, pp. 45 ff and vol. 4, pp. 168 ff and English trans. By T.J. Winter (Cambridge, the Islamic text society, 1989) pp. 13ff.

2. Ibid.

Death is a fact and people should not forget it. By remembering it, we can improve our morality and our behavior. Those who do not believe in Allah and spend their life engrossed in worldly pleasures, fear death and choose to ignore it. They may declare that they do not care about death. They only care about life and the enjoyment of it. Some are so careless that they may kill themselves or waste their health by using drugs or other harmful substances. They think that they are brave though suicide is an act of cowardice and a sign of a disturbed mind. No one from among humans actually likes death. Even the unthinking animals avoid it, the greatest and the smallest. Although they have no capacity to think about their lives, they still strive to avoid destruction. They take every possible action to escape death. Birds fly thousands of miles to seek warmth in the winter, so as not to be frozen. They know migratory route between their two homes and are never confused about the way. Trees and plants have no ability to avoid danger by rapid movement, but they send one shoot into the air to form their crown, and safeguard it by sending their roots into the ground to fix them firmly so that they can draw nourishment. Thus in some way they perceive their existence. Those who are wretched are unwilling to die. Even those who are certain that their misery will continue do not want to leave their world. Instead, they want their wretchedness taken away. The older man clings to life and fears death. Most people do not like death. They seek their own safety in every possible way.

Cure for Fear of Death

Death is not a horrible thing. Just as birth was the means of entering this world, which is so much wider than the world of the wombs, so death is the delivery into a world, which is wider, better and lasts forever. Of course, this everlasting world is reserved to the righteous who worked for it during the course of their life. Although Allah created us in a way that makes us abhor death and love life, He commands us not to throw ourselves into destruction[1], not to commit suicide and not to wish for a speedy death. We should not fear death. A person who fears death does not understand the meaning of death. He fears it for the following reasons:

Ibn Sina said that man does not know where he goes after death. He may think that his body will decompose and his identity will be lost. He may think that he will die and the world will go on without him. Such beliefs come from ignoring the idea of the perpetuity of the soul and its resurrection. He may think that death brings agony on top of the suffering from disease, which precedes death, and may cause it. Someone may fear death because he fears punishment after death, or because he is not sure about his own deeds and actions, or he may regret having to leave behind his wealth and property.

1. 1. The following verse is implied: "And spend in the way of Allah, and throw not yourselves by your own hands into destruction, but be good-doers, Allah loves the good-doers." (Al-Baqarah: 195)

In Ibn Sina's view, these are all false notions, unsubstantiated by the facts. To those who do not understand the meaning of death, he says it is nothing except that the spirit leaves the body, no longer uses its organs and the machinery of life. It is like a craftsman who laid down his tools. The spirit has no substance, no qualities. It cannot change or be destroyed. It can never vanish. On the contrary, it becomes complete and perfect after death.

Those who fear death because they do not know their destiny, are afraid not of death itself but of their own ignorance. One needs to learn about death. In this case, ignorance is the cause of fear. This is why scholars strive after knowledge and make sacrifices for it, and renounce physical pleasures. They choose to work hard and torment their body in order to release themselves from the fear and bondage of ignorance.

Natural death should not be feared but rather welcomed as the route towards perfection in the hereafter. Whoever fears death, fears being perfect. He would rather live in the bondage of imperfection and misery. There is no pain after death and we should not be afraid. Those who fear death because they fear the punishment that comes after it are really afraid of the punishment, not of death. This proves that our spirit will not die, and it also shows that there is Allah, the Just, who punishes sins and rewards good deeds. If a man fears punishment after death because of his sins, he should repent, and avoid doing wrong and disobeying Allah. Such fear rises from ignorance. The remedy for ignorance is knowledge. Anyone who knows the reality of things has a sure foundation and knows the way towards happiness. He can keep to this way and attain

happiness. It is a straight path; it is the way followed by those who have a religion.

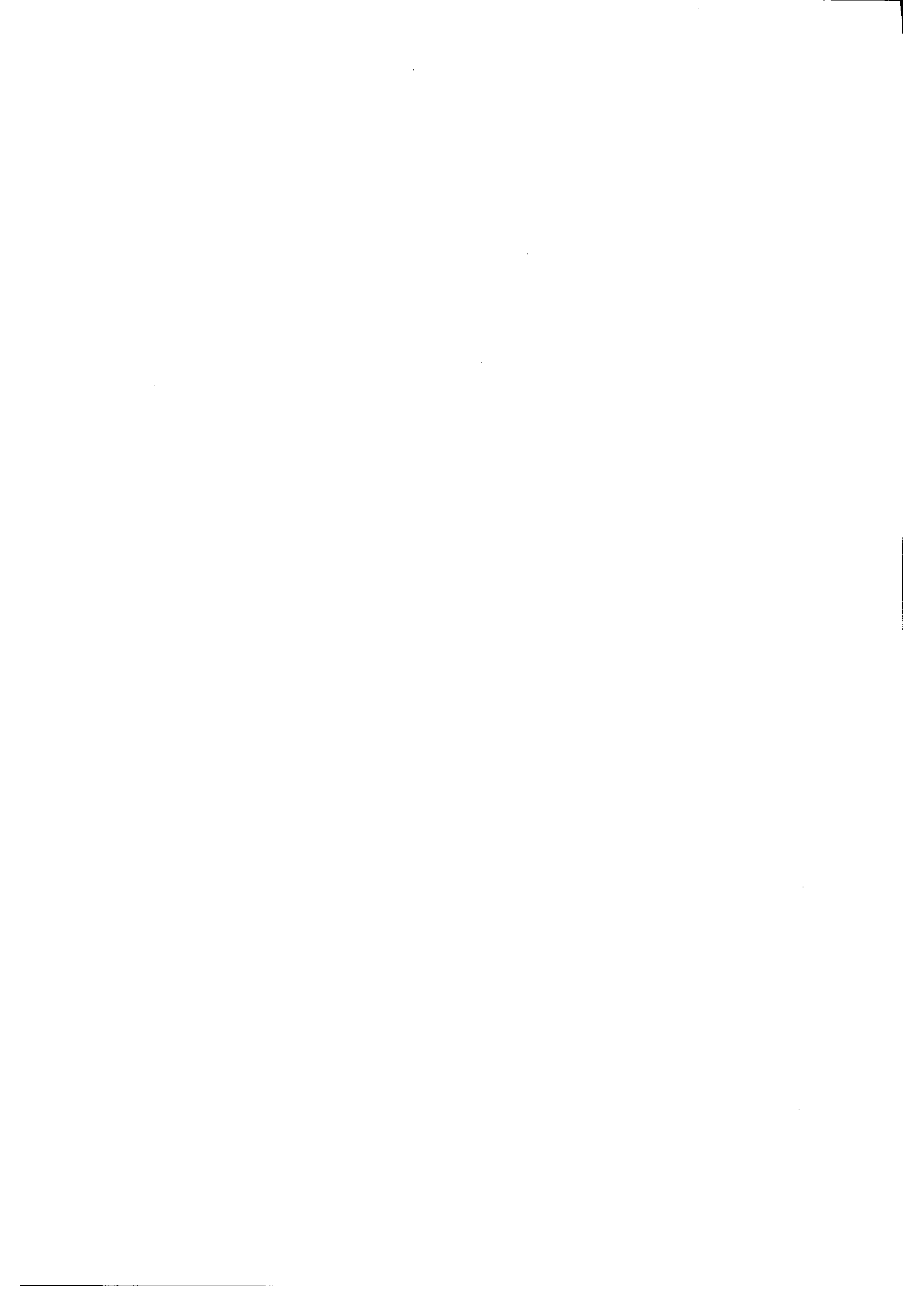
A person who fears death because he will have to leave behind all the pleasures of this world should not overburden himself with committing sins since regret will be of no avail on the Day of Judgment. It is an idea that brings no benefit. Man himself is a transitory being since everything must die. Whoever wishes to live forever, is always wishing for the impossible. "If everyone lived forever, the earth would be overcrowded within one generation."[1]

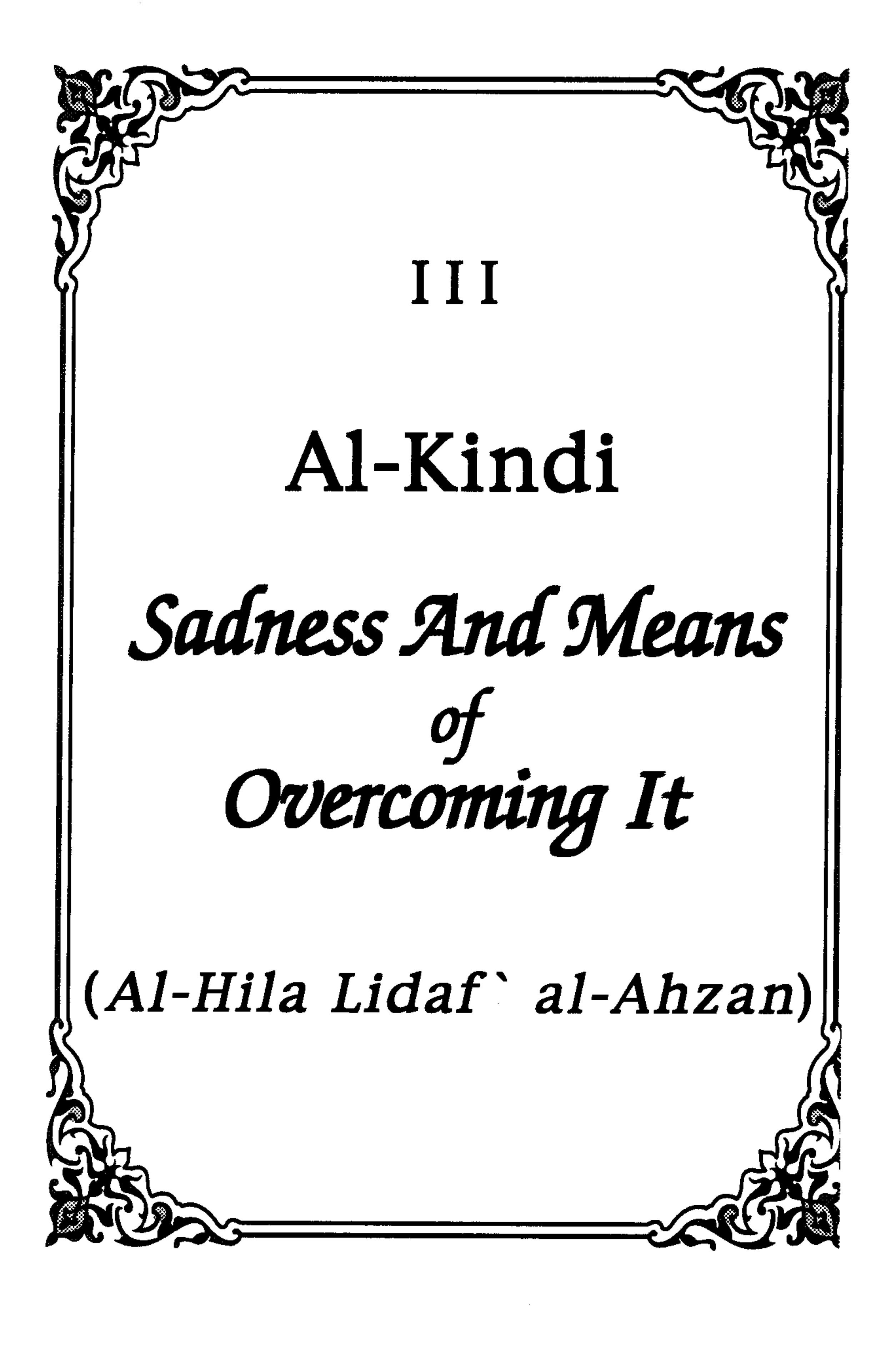
Death is a sign of Allah's justice and His care for His servants. Whoever doubts death, doubts Allah's Wisdom. A good person does not fear death but longs for it, because of the rewards he will receive after death, and the everlasting life he will enjoy. A virtuous man should not hasten his death. He should marshal all his abilities to avoid it and to prolong his life, in order to perform more good works and to bring happiness to his people. He should endeavor to live so that the people of his society may continue to profit from his good deeds. He should wish for death only if his death would be virtuous and would benefit the whole country. When such a man dies, the people should not weep for him but weep for their own misfortune. In this context, Socrates said, "Death is a reality and is inevitable. No one dislikes it except those whose unjust actions are many and whose just actions are few and who may be certain of bad consequences after death. None among the beings likes death even the irrational animals from the immensely giant animals to

1. The phrase in the parentheses is al-Kindi's but we add it here because it confirms our subject matter.

the tiniest insects who are not endowed with reason.[1] They have the inclinations to live and avoid extinction.

1. *Rasa'il ash-Sheikh ar-Rais* , Abu `Ali al-Hussain Ibn `Abdullah Ibn Sina and *Asrar al-Hikma al-Mashriqiyya* (Leiden, 1889) pp. 39-57. See also al-Farabi, *Fusul Mutaza`ah*, edited by Fawzi Metri (Beirut, Dar al-Sharq, 1971), pp. 82 ff., al-Ghazali, *Ihya'*, vol. 4, p. 471, and Al-Mubashshir Ibn Fatic, *Mukhtar Al-Hikam*, edited by David Knowles, pp. 460 ff.



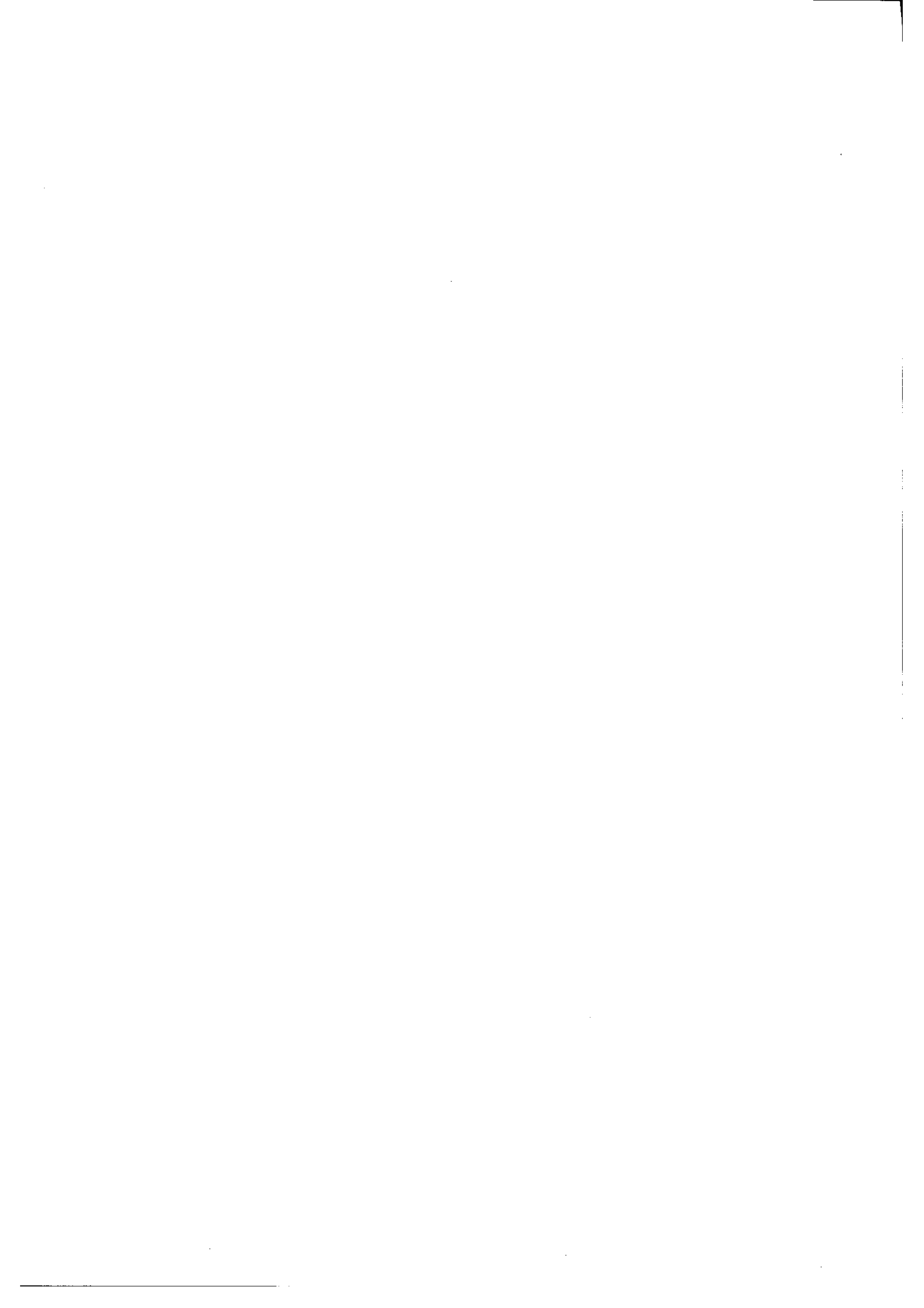


III

Al-Kindi

Sadness And Means of Overcoming It

(*Al-Hila Lidaf` al-Ahzan*)



Preface

Al-Kindi's Life

Al-Kindi, Abu Yusuf Ya`qub Ibn Ishaq (d. c. 257 AH - 80 AC), was born and brought up in Basra in Southern Iraq. His father was a governor of Kufa. He is the main pillar of Islamic philosophy. He was a pure and noble Arab, the pioneer of the scientific and academic discipline. He is the first scholar to his scientific principles. He had staying power and an extraordinary skill in classification and a passionate belief in the truth. He acknowledged the achievements and merits of other scholars before him, and the debt he owed to them. He influenced all succeeding generations of philosophers and psychologists. However, he believes that the Qur'an conveys a higher truth than philosophy and that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had Divine knowledge, through intuition, which is superior to anything that merely human knowledge can ever hope to attain. It should be noted that al-kindi, was the first scholar to set out a plan for his work before hand, establishing the tradition that scholars should explain their principles accordingly.

The latitude of mind, the cosmopolitan attitude towards philosophy and science in general are clearly expressed in the following words:

"It is fitting to acknowledge the utmost gratitude to those who have contributed even a little to truth, not to speak of those who have contributed much... We should not be ashamed to

acknowledge truth and to assimilate it from whatever source it comes to us, even if it is brought to us by former generations or foreign peoples. For him who seeks the truth there is nothing of higher value than truth itself; it never cheapens or abases him who searches for it, but ennobles and honors him."[1]

Al-Kindi's epistle was firstly published by Ritter, R. Walzer and Fevi Della Vida, from the Aya sofya ms. No. 4832, the first had established the Arabic text, the second translated it into Italian, the third revised the Arabic text.

Abdur-Rahman Badawi assured that this edition contains at least 200 mistakes as to its Arabic text and Italian translation[2]. Our translation is based on Badawi's edition.

The subtle means of overcoming sadness was an important essay written by al-kindi and I shall translate it but not word for word; an attempt should be made to preserve his figures of speech and idiom, however, the expert scholars may realize that I have taken some liberties with the text. This is because this book is not intended for scholars only, rather for a wider circle of readers.

From al-Kindi's introductory lines[3], we know that it was a reply to a learned, nobleman who had asked for advice about how to overcome sadness and worries.

1. See R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, p.12.
2. See Ibid, pp. 8-9.
3. *Rasa'il Falsafiyya*, Libyan University publications, 1393, 1973 AC pp. 6-32, Muhammad A. Abu Rida ed; *Rasa'il al-Kindi al-Falsafiyya* (Cairo 1950 - 1953) vol., 1953 vol. `Abd al-Halim Muhammad, *al-Tafkir al-Falsafi fi al-Islam,* (Cairo, Dar al-Ma`arif) second edition.

Sadness And Means of Overcoming It

Al-Kindi began by stating that we should identify the cause of one's sadness. It is impossible to treat anything if the cause is not known. Sadness is psychological pain. Apparently, mourning something lost causes it, or longing for something we deserve. He asked, "Can anyone be safe against these two sorrows?" Of course the answer is that no one can have all his desires satisfied, or be sure that he will not lose something which is precious to him. His definition more or less reproduces Galen's exposition on the subject in his Ethics. "Everything is transitory except the peace of mind," means spiritual satisfaction which brings peace and serenity to man. Although, al-Kindi did not extract proofs from the Qur'an or the *ahadith* of the Prophet (pbuh), many of his ideas are based on the Qur'an. For example: One should not feel too happy concerning the possessions and blessings given by Allah or feel too sad concerning the things he is deprived of.

As an illustration, Allah, Most High, says,

> ﴾*No affliction befalls on the earth or in yourselves, but it is in a Book, before we create it; that is easy for Allah; that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor rejoice in what has come to you; Allah Loves not any man proud and boastful.*﴿

(Al-Hadid: 22-23)

﴾*Allah outspreads and grant by measure His provision unto whomsoever He will. They rejoice in this present life; and this present life, besides the world it come, is naught but passing enjoyment.*﴿

(Ar-Ra`d: 26)

﴾*And strike for them the similitude of the present life: it is as water that we send down out of heaven, and the plants of the earth mingle with it; and in the morning it is straw the winds scatter; and Allah is omnipotent over everything. Wealth and sons are the adornment of the present world; but the abiding things, the deeds of righteousness, are better with Allah in reward, and better in hope.*﴿

(Al-Kahf- 44)

﴾*Leave them to eat, and to take their joy, and to be bemused by hope; certainly they will soon know!*﴿

(Al-Hijr: 3)

﴾*Now you have come to us one by one, as we created you for the first time, and you have left what we bestowed on you behind you backs. We do not see with you your intercessors, those you asserted to be associates in you; the bond between you is now broken; that which you ever asserted has now gone astray from you.*﴿

(Al-An`am: 94)

Whoever becomes sad because he has lost something or he longs for something which is unavailable, will be sad all his life. The nature of life is transitory. Sadness and happiness are opposites, they cannot co-exist in the soul. We should drive out sadness and do things that make us happy. We should be satisfied with what we have since this will guarantee our

happiness. The truth of this can be seen all around us. A man who finds pleasure in eating, drinking, making love and wearing fine clothes will regard all other matters as below him. One who gambles, loses his money, and spends his days in such useless and destructive activity, is nevertheless happy about his way of life and wonders why others do not follow his example. Also, the thief is beaten and humiliated and perhaps sentenced but nevertheless he thinks that he has acted heroically, and so on. We learn from all this that material things are not bad in themselves but according to our attitude towards them, and how we use them. Habits grow steadily, so do good ones. We should train ourselves to do good, and be patient in the gradual habituation of our souls, if we are not good by nature, so that we may enjoy our life on earth. If sorrow is psychological pain, we should remember the great lengths we travel in order to find miracles to cure physical ailments, even amputation or cauterization. Since the soul is more important, we should make every effort to cure it. The healing of the soul is more important than the healing of the body because our bodies are always of the same substance. Yet, it is our soul that makes one an individual. The body is ephemeral but the soul is permanent. One may add that the disease of the soul continues with the soul after death, whereas physical disease dies with the vanishing body. Al-Kindi went on to say that the medicine of the soul is not costly and asks for no effort except patience and determination. The best way to overcome sadness is to ask yourself whether this sadness is the result of your own actions or is it for the actions of others. If it is caused by your own actions, you can simply refrain from doing what makes you sad. The remedy lies in your hand and is in your own control. But we

should ask that do we do these deeds that make us sad willingly or thoughtlessly? If we do them willingly and sincerely wish not to be sad, then this is a contradiction and sign of madness. In other words, we are out of tune with our own minds. If others cause our sadness, we should try to dispel it, and be happy. If it is beyond our capability, we should not be sad before things actually occur. We should not worry too soon because this increases our sadness. Whoever gets sad, is being unjust to himself. One secret to throw off sadness is to look at other people who have lost something precious and to take our example from them. He gives an illustration from the life of Alexander, who gave orders that on his death, messengers were to be sent everywhere to say that anyone who had not lost a dear one was to attend his funeral. When the time came, no one attended. Everyone in the world had lost a dear one.

We should also keep in mind that there are others who have much less than us and are quite content. Sadness is a very bad thing. If you bring it upon yourself, you are surely not thinking properly. We should also remember that if we want to be safe against misfortunes and catastrophes we are seeking something that is impossible. The nature of things is that these things occur. They are a natural pair of decay and corruption.

To hope for perfect things in life is to hope for the impossible, which is a killing to your time. Accordingly, you will gain nothing but misery and ignorance and will be exposed to criticism and humiliation.

We should always remember that everything that our hands can grasp and belongs to all people, is within our domain but we are not more entitled to it than any other person. In contrast,

things that belong to us alone and cannot be taken from us by force are the things stored in our soul: goodness and virtue. These are the things that are worth mourning if lost.

But things that we can possess only by force and by robbing others are not worthy of sadness if we lose them. The reason is that if anyone is sad because people possess something that is theirs by natural justice, then this is envy, the worst of all evils, which we should try to avoid.

Anyone who wishes evil to his enemies is a lover of evil. Anyone who loves evil is evil himself. Worse than evil is the person who wishes evil to his friends. Anyone who wishes that his friend should lose his possessions because he prefers them to himself, he wishes misfortune on his friend and he is a lover of evil.

It should not escape our attention that everything we possess is only lent to us by the Almighty Allah, and He can take it back at any moment and give it to whomsoever He wills.

We may erroneously think that if Allah takes away His grace from us by the hands of our enemies, He is doing evil to us. The one who lends something to a person has the right to receive back his loan. This does not bring any humiliation upon us.

Rather, we are humiliated only if we show sorrow and sadness at having things taken from us. Such behavior characterizes the greedy, misguided people. When they are lent something, they are stupid enough to think that it is theirs forever.

When someone has lent something and wishes to have it back, it is best to return the object quickly and cheerfully. We

should be ashamed of behaving badly in this situation and not keeping to what is fair.

We should be ashamed of inventing silly and childish excuses for feeling sad when the One who has lent us something takes it back. We complain, "He has taken it by the hand of enemies; it is not fair. He lent it to us, but he should have taken it back pleasantly, not by the hand of enemies."

A messenger sent by the lender does not have to come in a form acceptable to us. It should not escape our notice that if the one who has lent several things to us takes away only the least of them. So, we should feel grateful to Him that we still have so much, and not regret what He has taken back.

Allah has left the best to us. Things that no hand can take away and nobody else can share in. we should tell ourselves that Allah has taken the lowest, the meanest thing and has left to us the best of things and they remain safe in our souls.

Again, it is important to remember that if we need to feel sad when we lose something then we should be permanently sad, and equally we should not fee sad at all for reasons explained above. Naturally, we do not enjoy being sad so we are acting against our happiness by mourning a loss of happiness. We should reduce our possessions, or even possess nothing, in order to be happy and not sad.

Socrates was once asked, "Why are you never sad?" He replied, "Because I do not possess anything which would make me sad when lost."

It is reported that the Emperor Nero (68-37 BC) was presented with a crystal dome of unique construction, octagonal in shape. He adhered to it greatly, and so did all around him. But

a philosopher said to him, "I notice that this dome shows that you have a certain poverty of soul. It indicates a potential disaster." Nero asked him, "What do you mean?" The philosopher replied, "If this is lost, you can never replace it, and you would covet a replacement. If it is broken or damaged then sadness will come to your soul."

It happened that when the king went to an island on an excursion, he lost the dome in the sea, and a great sadness did come upon his soul so that everyone noticed, and the dome did prove irreplaceable.

That is why we say that anyone who wishes to avoid sadness should reduce the possessions that he cares about. The Creator never created anything defective by nature. He guaranteed the survival of everything. For example, we see that the huge hippopotamus and the elephant are unique in their construction. They both need food, a place to rest and to protect themselves, and other things for their survival. Also the smaller creatures, Allah supplied them all according to their needs.

They seek food and lives without physical pain as long as man does not hunt them. But man has been given an intellect, which differentiates him from animals, and he covets unnecessary things, vanity in his food, decorative art, perfume, sweet singing, things which occupy him and leave him no time to perform his duties, and prevent him from relaxing in this world. This brings him pain and sadness, both when he strives to possess the pleasures, and when he loses them.

In this context, we should note that this is reminiscent of Ibn Hazm's remarks on anxiety and the means of dispelling it, as it shall be seen later.

"Anyone who has busied himself with acquiring more and more material things, will lose happiness in this world and the world to come. He will be miserable in this transitory life, his sicknesses will increase, and his pains and sorrows will continue and will never leave him.

People in this world are like people on board a ship traveling towards a destination. Then the captain pulls in temporarily to a harbor on the way, perhaps to take on water or stocks. The people disembark to stretch their legs. Some of them then come back on board and settle down again. They take the best places in the ship.

Others stay looking at the pretty things around the harbor, the meadows, parks and a great variety of pales, flowers and fruits. They listen to the beautiful bird while singing, examining the color of the soil, and picking up pretty shells. When they come back to the ship and they find places with plenty of rooms.

A third group picks up pretty stones and shells, fruits and flowers, and does not move far from the place where the ship harbored. They re-embark heavily laden. They are the slaves of stones, shells, faded flowers and rotten fruits, things that will soon be rubbish. They have to squeeze into the narrowest and the least comfortable places in the ship, and they are made even more uncomfortable by the bulk of the things they carry. They are occupied with their burdens and worry about them.

Another group is so taken by the place where they disembark that they forget about the ship altogether. The taste of the fruits` and the beauty of the sights make them forget the home that the ship is taking them to. They have never been free of sorrow, misfortune and pain, and they found that the pretty place houses snakes, tigers and other dangerous things.

When the captain of the ship shouts before he sails away, some of them try to run back heavily laden with their collections of objects but do not manage to reach the ship in time. They are left behind. A few did reach the ship and found very little room for them. Tigers either ate the ones left behind or they sank into pleasure and useless habits. Snakes bite some.

People who took their collections of objects into the ship found that the flowers faded, the stones lost their gloss, and everything became rotten and useless, nothing but a burden and an unpleasant companion. There is no alternative but to throw it overboard. The things that they collected so avidly become a nuisance, they hamper them and take up time. Their hands are empty and when they reach their destination they have a bad smell, and they are fatigued from being squashed in their places among all the rubbish, and from having to look after it. Some of these people actually die before the end of the voyage. Others become sick and weak. Those who came back to the ship first and took the best places come home healthy and happy.[1]

This is an image of our journey in this world towards the goal of absolute truth, and the different types of people on that journey.

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1. In this context Aquinas says that sloth, as we understand it here, denotes sorrow for spiritual goodness and it is evil on two counts, both in itself and in its effects. This sadness is expressed in the Greek word akedia, which is a kind of sadness whereby a man becomes sluggish in spiritual exercises because he wearies the body. He carries with it a disgust of work and especially a disgust of spiritual exercises, that is, work for Allah. Akedia is the withdrawal of the mind not from every spiritual good but from the Divine Good to which the soul is bound to apply its powers. It is akedia when a man is saddened at duties which he is bound to do for Allah. It signifies indifference, torpor, arising from grief or exhaustion. It has been imported into ascetic theology to signify sorrow or grief at having to serve Allah. It is the "Don't care" feeling, (*Moral Theology* of St. Thomas Aquinas, vol. 2. P. 302.

It is bad for us to be led astray by the beauties of creation, the flowering trees, sweet fruits, and plants, which soon wither away. Such things are burdens and we need to get rid of them, at sea or by fire. When they burn we even hold our noses at the smell.

Yet, we should remember that we should not dislike things that are not bad. We should only dislike bad things. If this is deeply engraved in our minds then we shall benefit by finding our sorrows and sadness dispelled. Our understanding should be enriched.

Nothing is more feared than death. But death is not a bad thing in itself. It is the fear of death that is bad. Death is the completion of our nature. If there were no death, no man would exist at all. This is because the definition of man is a being that speaks, lives and dies.

If man does not die he is not a man. It is not a bad thing to be as we are, to be in accordance with our nature. Here, we give an example. If food had a mind or understanding when it is inside a man, and had known nothing else, it would be sad when it had to leave. When it is digested, assimilated and ejected as semen, it would be sad to go and arrive in the woman's womb. But had you then made it to return to the man, it would be even sadder, remembering how little room it had there, how undeveloped it was. When it takes the shape of a human body and has to leave the mother's womb, it is sad. But if we say to someone in this world, would you like to return to the womb, he would be sad. It is the same when we have to leave this world, we do not like this. But when we have left this transitory life with all its sorrows and pains we come to a world where there is no pain

and no one can take away our good. If anyone asked us then to come back to this world we would not choose to do so. It is clear that our souls, which cling to material things, are going to think of death as a bad thing although it is not.

We should note that whenever we lose something material or spiritual we should make haste to add up what we still have. When we look at what remains with us, that reduces our sorrow and pain.

We should also take heed that whenever we lose or miss anything material, we should remember that is a thing which does not deserve out attention. This will change sorrow to gladness and something to be grateful for. Every misfortune becomes a grace when it decreases our worries.

Al-Kindi concludes his essay by saying, "O my thankful brother! follow this advice, engrave it in your soul, and you will be released from the bondage of sadness, and you will reach the best of degrees in the everlasting abode, the abode of the sinless.

Allah has prepared perfect happiness for you in your two abodes (here on earth and in the Hereafter) and He has shown you perfect favor, has counted you among those who follow a good example and enjoy the ripe fruit of the intellect, and has kept you away from the humiliation and squalor of ignorance."

It is interesting to note what St. Thomas Aquinas gave as advice on the question of sorrow in the 13th century. In his section, "The Remedies of Sorrow" he said that, "Sorrow may be alleviated by finding relief in pleasure, by having a good cry, by sharing the burden of sorrow with friends, and by contemplating the truth. The last method, the contemplation of truth, is "the greatest of all pleasures".

Anyone who desires something contrary to his nature is seeking the non-existent and can never be happy while a person who seeks spiritual and intellectual riches is always happy.

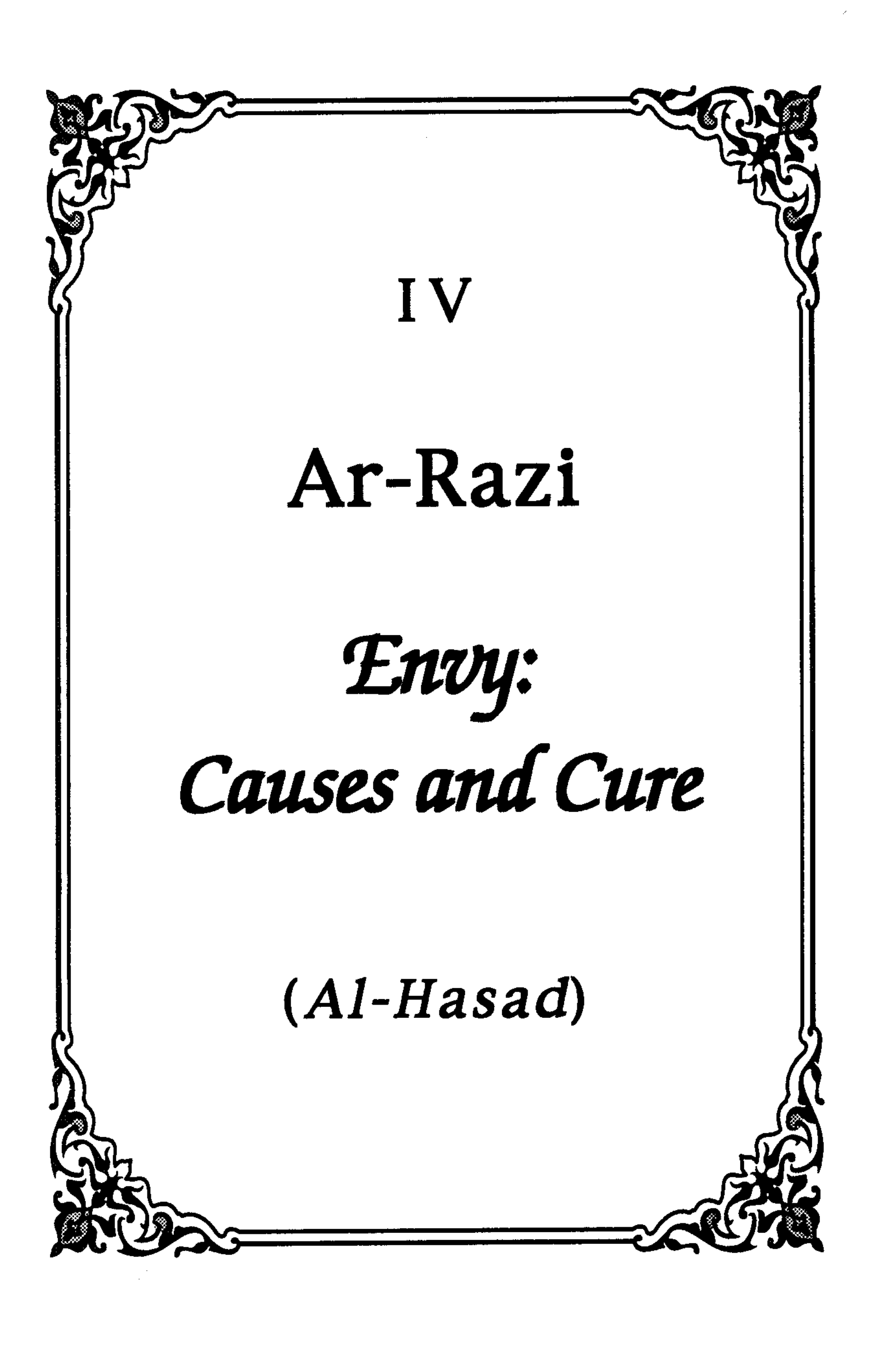
This is the way to combat sadness and acquire happiness. We should be satisfied with what we have, not complain about what we do not have, and we should not worry about what might happen in the unknown future.

Whenever we see people enjoying material things, which the soul always desires to possess, we should not covet. This will only cause us worry and make us feel unsettled. We shall have things in season, as we eat fruit when it is fresh and ripe. We should not expect strawberries in winter.

We should not mourn our losses since it is natural. If we want something and receive something else, we should be content with the latter.

Pythogoras provides us with a different means of getting rid of our anxiety and sadness. In our life we have to receive requests and give orders, either within the family or to our helpers and servants. When we give orders we should be prepared not to be angry if we are refused, or received carelessly.

Pythagoras said that if you wish your son, servant, or house-helper, to do something, you should remember that it is possible for them to obey or to disobey, otherwise it will be a great disappointment if they do not carry out your wishes.



IV

Ar-Razi

Envy: Causes and Cure

(*Al-Hasad*)

Preface

Ar-Razi's Life

Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zakriyyah Ar-Razi, known in the west as Rhazes, was born in al-Rayy, near Tehran in the year 251 AH - 865 AC and died 313 AH - 925 AC. He was brought up in that city and stayed there until he was just over thirty, then he moved to Baghdad where he lived for an unknown period of time.

Ar-Razi showed always great eagerness for learning and investigation. He was particularly interested in speculative sciences, literature and poetry.

Ar-Razi began to study and practice medicine at a late stage in his life. However, he became one of the greatest physicians in the history of medicine.

According to Ibn An-Nadim, Ar-Razi was always preoccupied in reading, writing and experimenting(1).

He was encyclopedic in depth and in range. His writings in science and philosophy are many. Ibn Abu Usybia estimated the total number of Ar-Razi's books and epistles to be 232. Only 50 of which were saved. His greatest work is *al-Hawi*, latinized as "Continens" and "The Comprehensive Book". *Al-Hawi* is an encyclopedia in itself of more than 20 volumes containing almost all kinds of medical sciences up to the author's time. For

1. See *al-Fihrist*, p. 345, Ibn Abi Usaybi`a, Uyun, vol. 1, pp. 343, 350 and Abu Bakr Ar-Razi, *Kitab al-Sira al-Falsafiyyah*, in *Rasa'il Falsafiya*, p. 109.

each disease, Ar-Razi gave the views of Greek, Syrian, Indian, Persian and Arab doctors, and then he added his own clinical observations and notes. This book was highly esteemed and widely recognized.

On the humanitarian level, Ar-Razi was not only committed to his profession but also to his patients. He was compassionate and charitable to them.

We conclude this brief account on Ar-Razi by his saying, "the absolute truth in medicine is an unattainable goal. Treating people upon theories written in books without thinking is, of course, dangerous."

Ar-Razi observed that the psychological state of a person affects his body as well. So, he insists that medical doctors should study psychology to be able to treat their patient's spirits and bodies. To confirm this, he wrote *al-Tib al-Ruhani*[1]. The section on Envy in this look is translated below. In his *Tabaqat al-'Umam*, Sa`id describes Ar-Razi as the greatest Muslim doctor without challenge. His books in medicine were the most notable and current books in medieval time and they were translated into Latin.

Ar-Razi remained the main authority in medicine without rival until the seventeenth century. Vesalius, the founder of modern anatomy in the sixteenth century, who knows only Ar-Razi's medical work, praised him as the last vigorous representative of the Greek tradition in the Middle Ages, whether Eastern or Western.[2]

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1. D Dibore, *Tarikh al-Falsafah fi al-Islam*, p. 90.
2. See Walzer, p. 17.

Concerning religion, Ar-Razi failed to keep balance between science, philosophy and religion. He welcomed the study of philosophy at the expense of religion asserting that the souls of men can be purified from the mud and darkness of this world, and saved for the world to come only by the study of philosophy.

To him, philosophy is not just a field of study, but a way of life, which he knows and acts accordingly[1]. On the other hand, he attacked the religion, which, in his view, divided people and had provoked only hostility and misery. He denied the validity of prophethood and rejected miracles.

Ibn Abi Hatim Ar-Razi and al-Biruni attacked Abu Bakr Ar-Razi's ideas on religion. The former called him clearly an atheist, and the latter described two of his books as full of blasphemy.[2]

Ibn Hazm also wrote a book called *at-Tahqiq* as a critical answer to Ar-Razi's book *al-`Ilm al-Ilahi* (the Divine knowledge).

In the context of his criticism of the belief in Metempsychosis, the transmigration of the souls, Ibn Hazm criticized Ar-Razi for his saying that the act of killing and slaughtering animals is allowed only for it releases the souls

1. Ibid, p. 16.
2. Ibn Abi Hatim Ar-Razi, *`Ilm An-Nubwah*, pp. 1-24 as quoted in Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zakariyyah Ar-Razi, *Rasa'il falsafiyyah*, Beirut, Dar al-Afaq al-Talidah, 1402 AH - 1982 AC, pp. 295-316, and al-Biruni, *Risalah fi Fihrst Kutub,* Muhammd Ibn Zakariyyah Ar-Razi, pp. 3-12 also Ibrahim Madkur, *fi al-falsafah al-Islamiyyah*, Cairo, Dar al-Ma`arif, pp. 83-89.

from being quoted into animal bodies to transmigrate to human bodies, otherwise it will be not allowed to kill or slaughter animals at all. The author of *al-Faisal* considered such beliefs as unwarranted and unsubstantiated notions and superstitions[1]. In Islam, the doctrine of metempsychosis is totally rejected.

Human souls belong to Allah who created them and are totally under His control during their life and after death. Each soul has only one single body to dwell in for its appointed time on earth, predestined by Allah. Therefore, the soul is not free to wander or transmigrate from one body to another whether human or animal. For any soul there is no way at all to live or to appear in any form on earth after death. The way in which Allah rewards the righteous and punishes the sinners is well and vividly described in the Glorious Qur'an and the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). In the Glorious Qur'an, Allah says,

> ﴿*O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back thou to thy Lord, well pleased (thyself), and well-pleasing unto him! Enter thou, then, among My Devotees! Yea, enter thou my Heaven.*﴾
>
> (Al-Fajr: 27-30)

> ﴿*That Day will man say: 'Where is the refuge?' By no means! No place of safety! Before thy Lord (alone), that Day will be the place of rest. That Day will man be told (all) that he put forward and all that he put back. Nay, man will be evidence against himself, even though he were to put his excuses.*﴾
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> (Al-Qiyamah: 10-15)

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1. See *al-Faisal fi al-Milal wal Nihal*, Cairo, Subayh, 1964, vol. 1. pp. 71 f.

﴾*Why, but when the soul leaps to the throat of the dying and that hour you are watching, and We are nearer to him than you, but you do not see Us. Why, if you are not under Our domain, do you not bring back his soul, if you speak truly?*﴿

(Al-Waqi`ah: 83-86)

﴾*They will (O Muhammad) question you concerning the spirit, say: "The spirit is of the bidding of my Lord (Allah). You have been given of knowledge nothing but little.*﴿

(Al-Isra': 85)

Envy: Causes and Cure

Based on Abu Bakr Ar-Razi's *Kitab al-Tib ar-Ruhani* and Imam al-Ghazali's *Ihya' `Ulum Ad-Din*

Envy is a very bad sin. It harms the body and the soul. It is a sign of faithlessness and interruption of mind. Allah commands us to seek protection against the evil of the envious person.

Allah, Most High, says,

﴿*Say: 'I take refuge with the Lord of the Day-Break from the evil of what He had created, from the evil of darkness when it gathers, from the evil of the women who glow on knots, from the evil of an envie when he envies.*﴾

(Al-Falaq: 1-5)

Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi says that envy was the first sin to be committed against Allah in heaven, when Satan, out of envy, refused to bow down to Adam at Allah's command.[1]

Envy caused Satan to be kicked out of Paradise and out of Allah's mercy forever. Envy was also the first ever sin to be committed against Allah on earth, when envy caused Qabil (Cain) to kill his own brother Habil (Abel)[2].

A wise man says, "Whoever is satisfied with Allah's measuring out of things, cannot be made unhappy by anyone, and the one who accepts his provision (*Qismah*) as sufficient to

1. See *Kitab Adab ad-Din Wa'l Duniya*, edited by Muhammad Fathi Abu Bakr (detanou, al-Dar al-Misriyya al-Lugna niyya, 1411 AH - 1988 AC, p.333.
2. Ibid.

him, will never suffer envy. Envy is the worst kind of evil for it is directed always against good and innocent people, brothers, relatives and friends."

The Greek philosopher Thalis says, "The envier should know that now many envied people are envied for something that may destroy them."[1]

Envy means to wish that your envied one loses all pleasures and favors. The envious one may, moreover, try by all possible means to deprive the one he envies of what he possesses.[2]

Envy is worse than miserliness, because the miser merely does not give anything away from his own possession, but the envious person does not like anyone to have anything good. This is a psychological disease, which is rather harmful.

The envious person is sad when someone has good fortune. In this, he is different from an enemy, who dislikes a person because he has a reason to dislike him. If these issues are settled, the enemies may become friends. But the envious person cannot be reconciled with the one he envies.

An envious person deserves the curse and wrath of Allah and His people. This is because he is actually criticizing God's Wisdom in granting good fortune to others. The people, too, hate him, because he does them harm. He was not harmed by the one he envied, nor was he deprived of anything because of him.

The envied person is, for example, a man who has been blessed with some favors and lives a distance either away from the one who envies him or close to him.

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1. *Fiqr al-Hukama'*. See A. Badauri, *Rasai'l falsafiyya*, p. 276.
2. See Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-`Arab*, Beirut, Dar Sadir, vol. 3. pp. 148 f.

Envy occurs frequently between neighbors, acquaintances and relatives. We find that when a new ruler comes from outside, the people feel no envy, but they do if one rises to power from their own number. The reason is the people's self-interests, egos and their desire to have a rank higher than others in achieving power or other things. When they see someone rise to power, who was like themselves the day before, they become sorrowful, and are dissatisfied with him as a ruler, despite how well he may treat them. They strive constantly to remove him from the position that they wanted for themselves. However, if a stranger comes whose history is unknown to them, they do not have these feelings towards him. The envious person does not behave fairly towards the object of his envy, because the latter does not prevent him in any way. The good fortune, which bestowed on the envied person was not desired by the envious one; and would not have fallen to his lot.

In fact, the envious one is often lazy and does not make the necessary efforts to achieve the heights achieved by someone else.

Envy harms the soul and the body; it occupies the soul when it could have been engaged in fruitful work or contemplation; it brings no profit to the body, only sadness, sorrow, anxiety, insomnia and anger. It causes a loss of appetite, one's complexion to become pale, one's features to become ugly and one's mood to always be bad.

There might exist a slight pleasure in envy, if any at all. In this context, Antisthemes says, "As iron is eaten away by rust, so the envious are consumed by their own passion."[1]

1. *The International Thesaurus of Quotations*, (Penguin books, 1970), no. 293.

The position which he longed for yesterday no longer seems worth wanting. The same things happen when he progresses to the next position. He is never happy, since he spends all his time planning his next ascent.

It is wrong to think that those who enjoy wealth and pleasure are equally happy.

Those who have everything in the world lose the ability to enjoy them. They are too familiar with the pleasures. The good things in their hands, which other people desire, become the things that they regard as day-to-day essentials. The pleasure that they take is not greater than what any other person takes in what he has. This is because they are always belittling what they have and longing for more. They are always tense and ambitious and have less relaxation than those below them.

If a thoughtful man remembers all this, and does not chase after every whim, he will know that happiness and relaxation is within his grasp. He only has to be happy with what he already has. The Glorious Qur'an says,

> ﴿*Or do they envy mankind for what Allah has given them of His bounty? But We had already given the people of Abraham the Book and the Wisdom, and conferred upon them a great kingdom.*﴾

(An-Nisa': 54)

> ﴿*Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could turn you (people) back to infidelity after you have believed, from selfish envy after the Truth become manifest unto them.*﴾

(Al-Baqarah: 109)

Also, Jesus (pbuh) said,

"A prophet is not without honor save in his own country."

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) warned Muslims against envy, saying,

"Envy devours good deeds and works as the fire devours fuel."

"Do not envy one another, do not forsake one another, do not hate one another, do not turn away from one another and do not trade over the trade of another (for a higher price) and be, O servants of Allah, brothers one to another."[1]

"The sickness of the nations perished before you... envy and hatred. Envy is shaving. I do not say that it shaves hairs but it shaves faith. By the one in whose Hand lays Muhammad's life, you will not enter Paradise until you believe. And you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I inform you about the thing that can establish this (love) among you, spread peace among yourselves (through greeting one another)."

It is useful to add some points in the context of the cure for envy. A prosperous person who attracts envy should not encourage the development of envy by spending extravagantly. He should be moderate in his lifestyle. He should not be arrogant towards the people and try to soften their hearts so that they feel no grudge or envy towards him. He should be charitable towards the needy, and give alms from his wealth.

1. Agreed upon *hadith*.

This will safeguard him against envy and give him the strength to withstand misfortune. He should pray, invoking God's name and seeking His assistance and protection. There are certain formulae of supplication in the Qur'an and *Hadith* which are designed to protect belongings.

Allah, Most High, says,

﴿*Of their wealth take alms, that so thou mighest purify and sanctify them; and pray on their behalf, verily thy prayers are a source of security for them: and Allah is One who heareth and knowth.*﴾

(At-Tawbah: 103)

﴿*Successful indeed are the believers, those who humble themselves in their prayers; who avoid vain talk.*﴾

(Al-Mu'minun: 1-3)

﴿*And those who before them, had homes (in Madinah) and had adopted the Faith, show their affection to such as came to them in refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot).*﴾

(Al-Hashir: 9)

If he is a great scholar he should not boast about this but he should be humble; and cooperate with his fellow-scholars. Envy between scholars is proverbial.

If someone is beautiful or handsome, he or she should not boast about it, but always give thanks to Allah for it, and seek His protection.

Causes of Envy

Imam al-Ghazali[1] counts seven causes out of which envy arises:

First: Enmity and hatred constitute the worst cause. Enmity multiplies envy and sharpens it. The envious enemy does not wish to see his envied opponent a happy and well-to-do person. Not only does he desire the latter to be deprived of every favor, but also he may practically plan to harm him. Envy is more irreconcilable than hatred. Envy generates hatred, which causes contention and fighting between people. The envious one may spend all his life attempting to deprive the envied of all favors by employing every conceivable scheme and machination.

Second: Pride. The envious person hates the envied to be superior to him. He holds him in contempt and is always keen to belittle him if the envious person's rival occupied a higher post or a higher rank in knowledge or he became wealthy

Thirdly: Arrogance. The arrogant person thinks that he is the best and looks at other people from high. He expects all people to serve his purposes and submit themselves to his will. In this context, the Glorious Qu'an tells,

> ﴾*But when the Truth came to them, they said, 'this is sorcery, and we do reject it.' Also, they say, 'Why is not this Qur'an sent down to some leading man in either of the two (chief) cites?'*﴿
>
> (Az-Zukhruf: 30-31)

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1. About al-Ghazali's milieu and life see my introduction to the English translation his book *al-Munqidh*.

The unbelievers found it difficult to follow Muhammad, who was a poor orphan, saying that: had the Qur'an been revealed to a rich man from Makkah or at-Ta'if they could easily follow him and humble themselves to him.

Fourthly: Expressing amazement, the envious is expressly amazed that a man like himself is favored by revelation coming to them from God, and of being close to God, so they envied them saying as in the Qur'an,

﴿*The (people) said, "Ye are only men like ourselves; and the Most Gracious sends no sort of revelation: Ye do nothing but lie.*﴾

(Yasin: 15)

﴿*What kept men back from belief when guidance came to them, was nothing but this: they said, 'Has Allah sent a man (like us) to be (His) Messenger?*﴾

(Al-Isra':94)

﴿*If you obey a man like yourselves, behold, it is certain ye will be lost.*﴾

(Al-Mu'minun: 34)

﴿*They said, 'Shall we believe in two men like ourselves? And their people are subject to us!*﴾

(Al-Mu'minun: 47)

﴿*Those who do not hope to meet Us (for judgment) say, 'Why are not the angels sent down to us, or (why) do we not see our Lord?' Indeed, they have an arrogant conceit of themselves, and mighty is the insolence of their impiety!*﴾

(Al-Furqan: 21)

﴿*Do you wonder that there has come to you a reminder from your Lord, through a man of your own people, to warn you, so that ye may fear Allah and receive His mercy?*﴾

(Al-A`raf: 63)

Fifthly: Fear of failure. This often happens between rivals who fight for obtaining one and the same object.

This is like the envy of two co-wives, children, students, and any other people who share the same craft or desire the same thing.

Sixthly: Love of power and holding authority and greed for fame. This is the characteristic of the man who loves to be unique and unchallenged in all spheres of life. To approach this, he envies everyone of his rivals.

Seventhly: The malicious wickedness of the soul. This is another cause of envy between people. Some people may find enjoyment in seeing the loss of fortune and favors of others. They longingly wish that all blessings and advantages should be bestowed upon them alone. Such people are sick, and this sickness is incurable. Envy is the root of evil and all vices, it leaves the envious person living in despair.

The pious Muslim who believes that Allah has predestined and measured out every thing in this world would not envy anyone for the sake of this transitory life.

Those who love this world envy one another for wealth, power, fame and prestige. The pious persons, on the contrary, have no such greed and longing for such things. So they bear no envy towards anyone. They desire the Next World and its everlasting life and pleasure.

In this context, Ibn Hazm says, "Ruthlessness arises from

covetousness, and covetousness arises from envy. Envy arises from desire, and desire arises from injustice, greed and ignorance. Ruthlessness gives rise to great vices, such as servility, theft, anger adultery, murder, passions and fear of poverty."[1]

Having counted the causes of envy, al-Ghazali shows how to cure it, saying, "Envy cannot be cured without knowledge and action. Concerning knowledge, the envier should know that envy is damaging and harmful to him in the first place in this world and the next. This is on one hand and on the other no harm can be inflicted on the envied person as a result of his envy. Rather, it may benefit him.

If the envious person thinks deeply about the matter, he will realize that envy has a bad effect on him. It engrosses his life and fills his heart with great sorrow and sadness.

The real envy of the envier is the envy itself. Envy in any way cannot change Allah's predestined plan.

In the Glorious Qur'an, Allah, Most High, says,

> ﴿*Say: Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our Protector': And on Allah let the Believers put their trust.*﴾
>
> (At-Tawbah: 51)

One of the very effective means to cure envy and to illuminate its bad effect and evil roots from society is to spread love, care and tolerance amongst people to strengthen their social ties and cement their relationships.

The envier should help himself getting rid of and freeing

1. *In Pursuit of Virtue*, p. 167

himself from the bondage of envy before it destroys his life in this world and throws him in the fire for ever in the Hereafter.

Anas Ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) said,

"Once we were sitting with the Prophet (pbuh) and he said, "A Man who is to enter Paradise will come now from this direction. Anas said, "then a man from among the Ansar (the original citizens of al-Madinah) appeared from that direction. He was shaking off the water from his beard after Wudu', holding his shoes in his left hand, He greeted us. The following day and the day after the Prophet (pbuh) said the same thing about that man and he appeared from the same direction. After the Prophet (pbuh) left, `Abdallah Ibn `Amru Ibn al-`As followed the man who the Prophet (pbuh) was talking about `Abdallah told him, "I have disputed with my father and I swore by Allah that I wouldn't enter my father's house for three nights.

If you can give me shelter for these three nights, please do. The man agreed, so he spent three nights with him. `Abdullah said that he did not see the man stand for extra prayers at night. But noticed him glorify Allah's (the Almighty) name many times in his bed `Abdallah also said, I haven't heard him saying anything but good words. After the three nights had gone and I was about to belittle his deeds I said to him: "O servant of Allah! In fact, there was neither anger nor separation between my father and me. But I told you so after I heard the Prophet (pbuh) saying such and such about you. So, I wanted to know exactly your work, and the deeds which made you deserve Paradise, but

I have not seen you doing that much of righteous activities.

The man said, "It was what you have seen." `Abdullah Ibn `Amru said, "After I left him, he called me to come back. Then, he said, 'The reason that I deserved Paradise is nothing other than what you have seen with your own eyes. But besides this, I do not cheat or envy any Muslim for any favor that Allah bestowed upon him.'

`Abdullah Ibn `Amru said, 'I said to him, 'These qualities were the means to reach this high rank, but these qualities we cannot reach.'"[1]

The Prophet (pbuh) also said,

"The diseases of the earlier nations will soon overcome you." The Companions asked, "What are the diseases of the earlier nations?" He said, "They were indulging in pleasures and debauchery, insolence or heedlessness, piling wealth, rivalry in running after world pleasure keeping away from each other, envying one another until chaos and oppression prevail."[2]

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

"Poverty is about to turn into Kufr, infidelity, and envy is about to overcome Qadar (one's fate)."[3]

The Prophet Zakariyyah (pbuh) said that Allah said,

"An envious person is an enemy of My favors, discontent

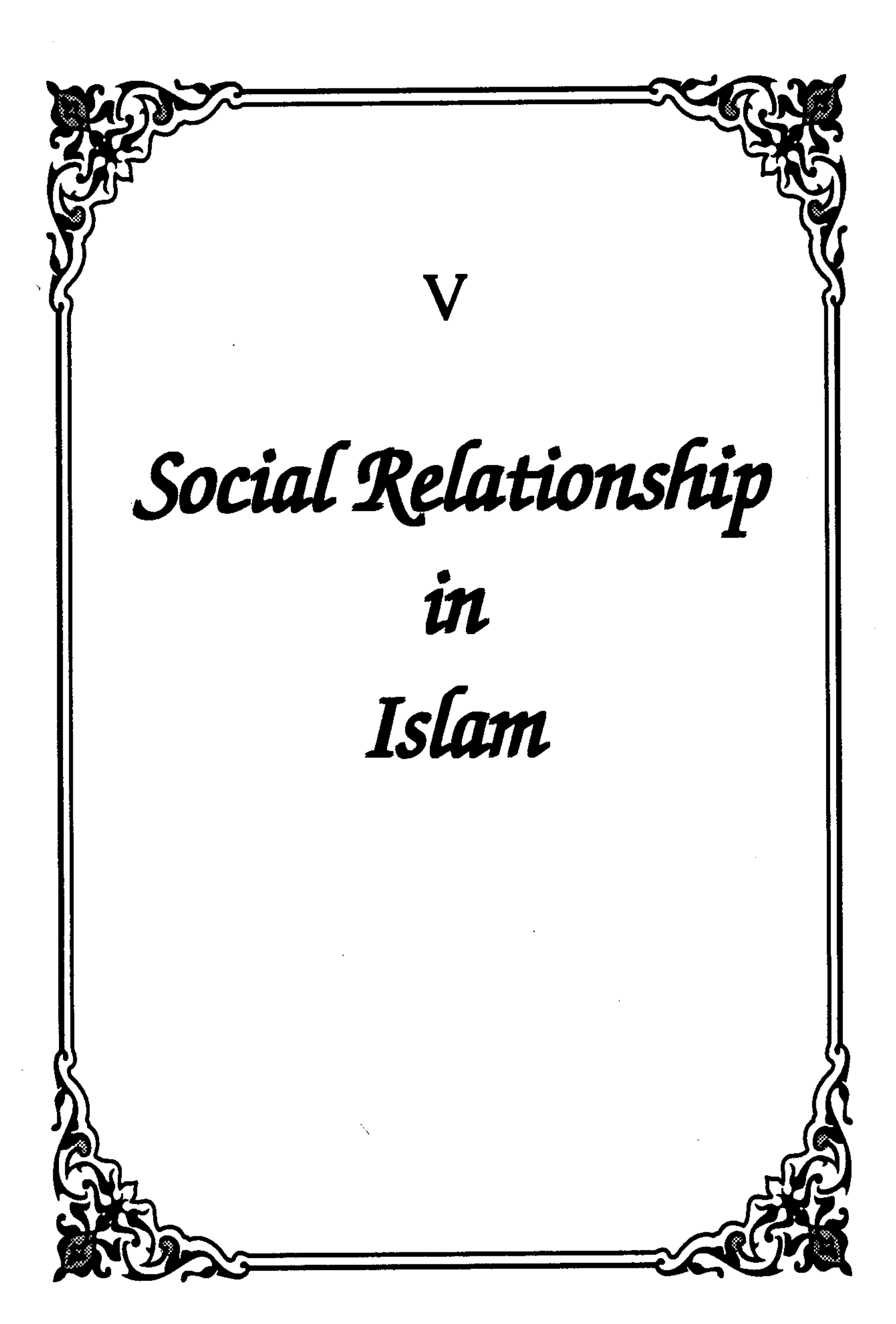
1. Narrated by Ahmed, and it is authenticated according to al-Bukhari and Muslim's conditions.
2. Narrated by Ibn Abi Ad-Dunyah from Abu Hurairah.
3. Narrated by al-Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad.*

with My decree, and dissatisfied with the way of dividing My favors which I have distributed among My people."

The Cure for Envy

The cure for envy is to imagine that the object of one's envy lies far away, perhaps in China or India, and is of no concern to one' self.

To get rid of envy, the envious person should remember that what he imagines about the object of his envy, the life he leads and the pleasures he enjoys are probably distorted. Man always desires things and thinks that who have them are happy, riding the crest of pleasures wave. When he does achieve it, however, he is happy only for a moment, before he thinks of the next thing to covet.



V

Social Relationship in Islam

Social Relationship in Islam

Allah created humans as social beings to live in aggregated society. We instinctively socialize. Man's progress in all spheres of life by eternal principles bestowed upon him is guided by Allah. Since the time of creation of man, Adam was taught the knowledge of everything directly by Allah. We cannot satisfy our need or achieve any goal without collective efforts of many individuals. Take an example of a child. From the very beginning of our life the woman cannot deliver a baby without the help and assistance of her family, doctors, nurses, anesthesia specialists, and scores of supporting organization as well as industries for prenatal and postnatal care of the baby. Similarly, the farmers, truckers, bakers, advertisers and financial institutions bring a loaf of bread to our table. The products we consume in modern age are so complex that many industries have combined their resource of humans and non-humans to give them finished product form. People who satisfy their needs with modern finished product are much less in numbers than the producers required. Man cannot live alone or satisfy his needs independently. The very first appearance of man as a child shows that the poor baby cries as he/she is separated from his mother's womb due to social deprivation. The baby gets satisfied when her/his mother cuddles her/him and makes her/him feel socially safe and secure. His mother supplies his need of food which is an outcome of social cooperation. When the child grows up he/she cannot satisfy higher levels of love,

esteem, status, power, and self actualization independently without the help and support of others. He has to be given authority by his superiors, to be accepted by his subordinates and cooperation from his peers, and the environment of (government, society, technology) as well as clients) to satisfy his/her innate feelings for perfection. To be a socially successful individual is to have a productive and creative relationship with society. Any failure or success in our life is a result of social interaction. The connotations of acceptance or rejection of our social behavior determine our adaptability to the society. The more adaptable we are the more successfully we live.

Social deprivation is a big problem if there is no punishment. If a person is left in a desert alone, he will never be happy or feel secure. He needs somebody to give him company and assist him in difficulties. When Allah wanted Adam to be happy and secure, He created Eve to be a wife and a companion in the time of ease in Paradise and hardship on earth. He created her out of Adam's body to have harmony with him. At the same time, He created differences. These similarities and differences reinforce social cooperation between different natures of individuals. When man/woman feels to socialize and does not find a human being, he would try to socialize with animals. Some explain this process of socialization in Arabic as well as in western literature, such as Ibn Tufayl the philosopher. Ibn Tufayl wrote his story *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* to underline the impact of environment and society in man's life. Hayy Ibn Yaqzan was a child who was left in a forest at his birth. A female deer looked after him. As soon as he grew up he socialized with animals in the forest, and understood their language and behavior well enough to deal with them. The importance of social relationship

illustrates that it has been guided and defined by Allah, Most High, Himself, because it is the essence of existence and success in life. The example starting from the child and parent, he described many relationships up to the leader Prophet and with Allah Himself. Islam explains the kinds of human relationship between brothers, sisters, relatives, neighbors, fellow beings, men and women, men and animals, and the environment in general. Islam laid down certain rules and regulations to maintain and protect these relationships as can be seen in the following, the Prophet (pbuh) said,

> *"Love for your fellow what you love for yourself and hate for him what you hate for yourself. Members of Muslim society are like one and the same body in their mutual love and sympathy. If a limb of that body suffers pain the whole body feels it and responds to it by sleeplessness and fever.*[1]

> *"The example of two brothers, maintaining each other (in good spirit) is like the two hands each one cleans the other. In no time two Muslims meet without benefiting one from the other."*[2]

> *"One believer to another believer is like one block of a building. Each brick of this block supports and strengthens the other."*[3]

Our Prophet declared the sanctity and dignity of man's blood at even higher level than *Ka`bah.*

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1. Agreed upon *hadith.*
2. *Musnad Al-Firdaus*, on the authority of Anas.
3. Agreed upon *hadith.*

The Muslim is defined by the Prophet (pbuh) as the one whose fellows are safe from the harm of his tongue and hands.[1]

The Prophet (pbuh) once asked his Companions,

> *"Do you know who is a Muslim." They answered, "No, Allah and His Messenger knows best." The Prophet (pbuh) said, "The Muslim is the one from whose hands and tongue his fellows are safe, and a believer is the one in whose hands the properties and lives of his fellow men are secure."*

The Companions asked the Prophet (pbuh), "Who is the immigrant?" He said, "He is the one who gives up sin or evil." A man asked the Prophet (pbuh) "what is Islam?" He said, "To submit your heart to Allah, and your fellows must be safe from your hands and tongue."

The Prophet (pbuh) emphasized the social aspect in a man's character by saying, "The believer is one who loves others and is being loved by others and the one who does not love or is not loved is not a proper Muslim."

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

> *"If Allah is happy with someone He gives him a good friend who helps him if he intends to do good and reminds him if he forgets to do so."*

Islam calls upon Muslims to establish brotherhood among them as Muslims and with others as brothers in humanity, to be productive and charitable, to fulfill their duties towards all people. Friendship and brotherhood in Islam is the fruit of good

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1. Agreed upon *hadtih.*

conduct, and likewise enmity is contrary to good conduct. The best Muslim is the one with the best character and conduct. The Prophet (pbuh) characterized it in the following words,

> *"I have been sent to perfect the good moral virtues of character."*[1]

Everything, in Islam, is measured in terms of a good moral character.

The Prophet (pbuh) said

> *"O, Abu Huriarah keep good conduct! Abu Hurairah said, "What is good conduct?" The Prophet answered saying, "Keep the relationship with one who cuts it off, forgive the one who oppresses you and give charity to the one who deprives you."*[2]

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said,

> *"Allah will give shade to seven on the Day when there will be no shade but His: a just Imam, a youth who has been brought up in the worship of Allah (i.e., worshipping Allah sincerely from childhood); a man whose heart is attached to the mosques (i.e., he prays the compulsory prayers in congregation in the mosque); two people who love each other only for the sake of Allah, meeting and parting only for this sake; a man who refuses the lure of a charming and noble woman to commit adultery, by saying: I am afraid of Allah; a man who gives in charity so secretly that his left hand*

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1. Reported by Ahmad and Al-Baihaqi. Al-Hakim classifies this *hadith* as *Sahih*.
2. Reported by Al-Baihaqi in *Al-Shu`ab*.

knows not what his right hand has given; and a person who remembers Allah in seclusion and his eyes become flooded with tears."[1]

Relationship between Muslims should not be only for self-interest and material gain but also for spiritual and ethical needs.

Pure love for the sake of Allah and mutual care and cooperation between Muslims bring a good life in this world and in the next.

Love for the sake of Allah is the most beneficial and effective remedy for the individual and the society, and it is the only guarantee of a nation's safety and perpetuity. However, hatred and dislike are the most destructive and seeping diseases that can befall any people. Due to this Allah reminds Muslims of the favor He bestows upon them by bringing their hearts together after enmity and conflict. Hatred generates envy in the society when envy prevails life itself becomes unbearable.

The rich will not enjoy their richness fully because they will be a target of the grudges and envious thoughts of the needy and the poor. The society would not, on the other hand, protect him against the strong waves of hatred and hostility.

Moreover, the poor will never feel happy or satisfied unless the rich are brought down from their level or even lower and worse. The society will be thus loose and shake and in this polluted atmosphere no society or organizations can achieve a good future.

For this reason Islam calls for unity and warns strongly

1. Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

against division, conflict, hatred and envy.

Allah, Most High, says,

﴾*And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and not be divided among yourselves, and remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you; for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye become brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make His signs clear to you: that ye may be guided.*﴿

(Al `Imran: 103)

﴾*And obey Allah and His Messenger; and fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart; and be patient and preserving: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.*﴿

(Al-Anfal: 46)

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said,

"Do not envy one another, do not forsake one another, do not hate one another, do not turn away from one another and do not trade over the trade of another (for a higher price) and be, O servants of Allah, brothers one to another."[1]

Friendship

"Friendship" in Arabic is called *Sadaqah*, and "friend" is *Sadiq*. The philological derivation is *Sidq*, "truthfulness". A friend is a true or a truthful man. A friend is closer to his friend than to his brother, and even more sincere. Brotherhood, without

1. Agreed upon *hadith*.

friendship, ranks below friendship. Friendship is a similarity in feelings, inclinations, emotions and spiritual longings. A true friend, unlike a brother, cannot be an enemy.

A brother may use his friend, to kill his own brother. True friendship brings profits and can improve the position of the two friends, or at least one of them. For example, a friend may be a disciple, a companion, and even a caliph. It is natural to have friends. Children play together and cry when separated. Friendship only exists between humans because it needs human minds and means of expression. When a young animal follows its mother or a grown animal its mate, this cannot be termed friendship. In the Qur'an, friendship is mentioned under the following titles: *Al-Sadiq, Al-Khalil* and *Al-Hamim.*

It is important to note here that these words seem to be synonymous and interchangeable, but serious philological study reveals great differences. The first word, *Al-Sadiq*, denotes the mutual relationship between two persons. They need not necessarily both be virtuous and moral in behavior. They may unite in bad actions. The word *Khalil* can also be used in two senses. The first is to refer to a complete harmony between the two people involved. It can also refer to a pair of evil people who do bad things. As an example of the first, Allah calls Abraham *Khalil* "friend" meaning that he is very close and obedient to Him. In the eyes of Allah, Abraham was in himself equal of a whole-devoted nation.

The word *Siddiq* means a complete, true, friendship, entailing complete understanding and loyalty. That is why Allah does not use only the term *Khalil* for Abraham, but also *Siddiq*. It is also important to note that the Qur'an uses *Siddiq* only

twice, once when referring to Abraham, and the second one when referring to Zakarayah. In both cases, it comes before the two persons were designated as being prophets. This means that true friendship with Allah and with good people is a very important qualification of a Prophet.

It is also significant to note that when Allah describes hi relationship with Abraham, He called him, a friend of Allah, and not for example, his father. This indicates clearly that friendship in human relations is much stranger than blood relations.

Two friends who are not faithful to each other will regret their actions in the Hereafter. They will reproach each other. No friend can save his friend in the next life unless they were both good. True friendship is a gift from Allah. The Prophet Zakariyyah prayed to Allah not to leave him alone. It is evident in the following verse,

> ﴿*And (remember) Zakariyyah, when he cried to his Lord: "O my Lord! Leave me not without offspring, through Thou art the best inheritors.*﴾

(Al-Anbiyaa': 89)

The prophets and messengers of Allah praised their companions and looked after them well. The Qur'an puts friends on a level with blood relations. A friend may eat at his friend's house without asking permission and without hesitating. There are different ranks of friendship, the highest of all is the *siddiq*. True friendship puts no barrier between friends. They support each other and miss each other when separated. If one of them feels jealous then the friendship is not true. Some people claim that they are friends and pretend to be sincere, but they do not

understand true friendship and its obligations. In life, we may come across people complaining that they have no friends, that their friends have left them for no good reason. Such people do not stop to think whether they treat their friends well or not. They may be liars, unsociable or try to impose their own wishes and characters on the others. They may build castles in the air and rouse false expectations, and when the friend discovers his real character, he shuns them. They may base their friendship on material profits and practical ambitions. This is a recipe, which will quickly spoil a friendship. To maintain friendship, a friend should remain faithful and remember his obligations to his friend. A true friend is a source of happiness and solace for whatever we do.

"Friendship is a disinterested commerce between equals."(1)

Someone may wrongly imagine that a friend is jealous of his own good fortune or good works, fearing that they may become separated. This is not so. A true friend does not change and cannot wish anything bad for his friend, although of course he does not wish to be separated from him.

However, the following statements affirm this fact,

"A good friend is my nearest relation."(2)

"One loyal friend is worth ten thousand of relatives."(3)

"In the time of prosperity everyone pretends to be a friend but in the time of trouble and grief the insincerity goes out in a

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1. Oliver Goldsmith, *The Good-natured Man*, 1768.
2. Thoms Fuller, *Gnomologia* (1732, 1529).
3. Euripided Orestes (408 BC) tr. William Arrowsmith.

flash."

Others may imagine that friends are taken merely for pleasure, and that a happy man needs no friends. This is also untrue. Friends are not only for pleasure: they also bring virtues. In themselves, they are good. We should be compassionate to our friends and display our affection, but without exaggeration, so that it is sustainable at a level that represents its true nature. Friends are able to reproach each other when necessary. A wise man has said that when you want to befriend someone do not reveal how keen you are, and do not hold back too much. Draw close gradually as if you like him, and keep enough distance as if you did not like him, because he will not like you if you throw yourself on him, and may be better attracted if you appear slightly reticent.

A wise man was asked, "How could you get friends?" his reply was, "Honor them in their presence and speak well with them in their absence!"

Confirming this principle, the Prophet (pbuh) said,

> *"You love for your brother what you love for yourself. And you hate anything to happen to him, that you would have to happen to yourself."*

A friend should be careful, because his friend may become his enemy, and will recognize him much better than any enemy and know how to harm him.

In this context, Aristotle says, "You should include in your prayers: 'O Allah! Protect me from my friends, because it is not in your own power to defend yourself against them."

Galen said that to draw near to hypocrite without due care is

like running up to an enemy without carrying a weapon.

> *"There is no good in one who does not love and is not loved by others,"* said the Prophet (pbuh) in a *hadith.*

When Allah wishes good for someone, He gives him a friend who will remind him if he forgets or neglects his duties, and will help him when he remembers.

"Two brothers, two friends are like two hands that wash each other."

"If two believers meet, Allah makes them give benefit to each others."

To encourage brotherhood and friendship among people, the Prophet (pbuh) said,

> *"If a man gets friends for the sake of Allah, Allah will set him a high rank in Paradise."*

There are many *hadiths* that show the high level and closeness to Allah of those who are sincere with their friends and brothers. They will be blessed with footstools of light in Paradise, will be seated near to Allah and their dress will be of light.

> *"The one more beloved to Allah is the one who loves his friend more."*

Among the seven categories of people who will come under the company of Allah are:

> *A just ruler,*

A young man engaged in worship,

A man who is attracted towards the mosque: When he leaves it, he desires to come back to it.

Two people, who love each other for the sake of Allah, meet for His sake and separate from each other for His sake.

Imam `Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "You should take friends. They will be counted in this world and in the next." He also said that man should travel the longest journey in search of sincere friend.

Ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both) said, "Even though I fast every day, pray every night and spend all my wealth in Allah's way, without keeping count, if I die one day with no love for those who obey Allah and no hatred of those who disobey Allah, nothing will profit me at all."

We should be careful about choosing our friends, because the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"*A man shares the same faith as his friend.*"[1]

Therefore, good conduct and behavior and above all piety are important in choosing a friend.

Ja`far As-Sadiq said, "You should not keep company with five kinds of people:

a) A liar because he will deceive you,

b) A fool who will bring you no benefit. Yet, he will bring you harm if he tries to bring you benefit,

c) A miser since he will abandon you when you are in dire need,

1. Reported by Abu Dawud and At-Tirmidhi.

d) A coward for he will hand you over to your enemy and then run away, and

e) A frequent sinner because he will sell you for a crust of bread or even less.

The most eminent Sufi, al-Junayd, said, "The friendship of a well-loved sinner is dearer to me than that of an abhorred learned man."

The caliph Al-Mansur said, "Friends are of three kinds: the first kind are like food, a necessity of life, you cannot do without their help. The second kind is like medicine, and you need their help at certain times. The third kind is like an epidemic disease and you are better without them at any time."

Friends who group together only for rational reasons are like trees which give shade but bring no fruits.

Al-Ghazali compared the relationship of two friends with that of husband and wife. Rights and obligations arise from the relationship. They should even share their wealth and property. There was also friendship between immigrants in Madinah and the Prophet's helpers. One tore his garment in half to share with his friend. Some even gave priority to their friend's needs over their own, to the extent that a friend would willingly be hanged to save his friend. In the Glorious Qur'an, Allah, Most High, commends their behavior, saying,

﴾*And those who before them, had homes (in Madinah) and had adopted the faith, show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to (the latter), but give them preference*

over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). ﴿

(Al-Hashr: 9)

There were two friends, both had debts. Each planned to pay off his friend's debts before his own. When they met they found that they had paid each other's debts.

We should be careful not to break a friendship without a good reason.

We should beware of gossip-mongers who enjoy breaking up friendships.

Once, a gossip-monger came to Alexander and spoke badly about one of his friends. Alexander asked him, "How long have you known this man." The gossip-monger said, "For such and such a time." Alexander said, "How can I believe what you say when I have known him much longer than that?"

Another wise man, Al-Ahanf, said that a friend has the right to have the following three things forgiven:

a) A transgression in the time of anger;

b) A transgression caused by too much fondness of you, and

c) An unintentional mistake.

Aristotle said that a friend should sacrifice many things for the sake of friendship, even to the point of laying down one's own life. You sacrifice your blood or your money for your friend. To your acquaintances, you show generosity and a good face. To the general public, you show cheerfulness and greet them. To your enemy, you show equity and justice.

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1. Henry Adam, *The Education of Henry Adam*, 1907, 20.

"One friend in a lifetime is much, two are many; three are hardly possible."[1]

"Every man passes his life in search after friendship." [1]

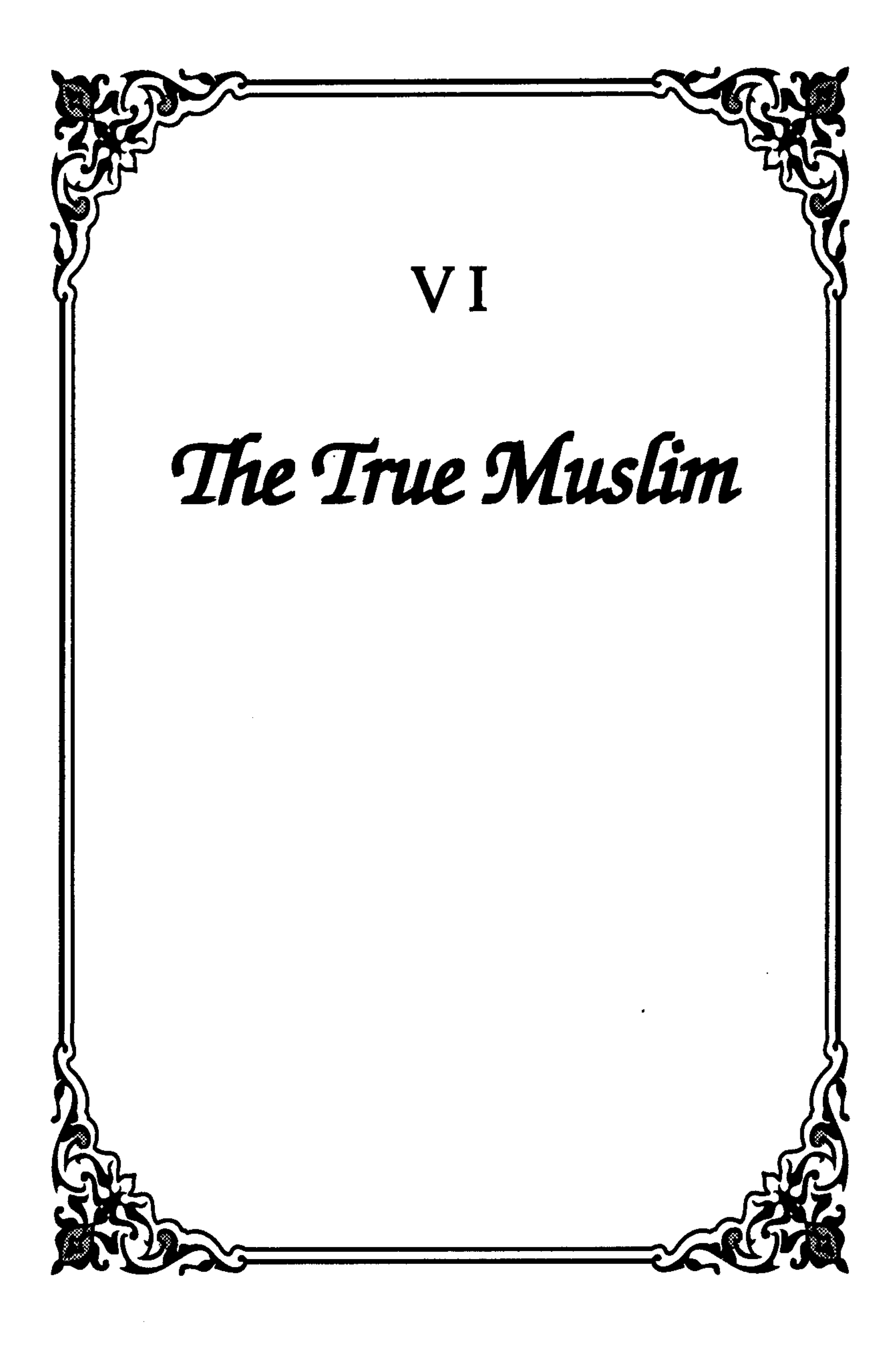
Emerson said also, "A friend may be well reckoned the masterpieces of nature."

"Friendship is a single soul dwelling in two bodies." [2]

"Friendship is like money, easier made than kept."[3]

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1. Emerson, *Friendship Essays*, first series, 1841.
2. Aristotle. 4thc. Bc.
3. Samuel Butler (d. 1902) Notebooks (1912).



VI

The True Muslim



The True Muslim

The Prophet (pbuh) says that a Muslim is a person whose tongue and hand will harm no one. A Muslim should be kind to animals. He should not torture them or kill them for pleasure. He should respect even the earth on which he walks. Allah has honored certain places, such as Makkah, Madinah and Jerusalem. Allah has also forbidden us to insult periods of time, saying He honored certain months and days. Al-Hasan al-Basri said, "The marks of a Muslim are as follows: He holds fast to his religion, he can be very sure of his decision in complicated matters, he spreads belief in eternal values, he pays his dues, he adopts a middle course in riches, he controls pains of hunger when starving, he will do good when he is in power, he will bear the burden of friendship, he will have patience in times of danger, he will not allow his anger to have victory over him, or his excitement to put him at risk, or his passions to have the upper hand, he will not allow his belly to lead him into acts of which he will be ashamed of, or his greed to make him flighty, or his selfishness to make him mean, he will help the oppressed and show kindness to the weak, he will not be extravagant, he will make good use of his money, he will pardon everyone who oppresses him, he will excuse any illiterate person who troubles him, and people will know that they are safe at his hands. Al-Hasan al-Basri himself was a man of action. He preferred to teach people by setting an example rather than talking. One day some slaves complained to him that they were badly treated,

hoping that he would give a talk in the mosque about the treatment of slaves. He promised to do so, but he waited two years before he did it. After the speech, every slave in Basra got his freedom. The slaves asked him why he waited two years while they were being tortured. He replied that he had to wait until he had enough money to buy a slave, so that he could free him before he asked other people to do the same.

Al-Basri is frequently quoted by speakers, Muslims and non-Muslim moralists. It is important that the Angel Gabriel came to the Prophet (pbuh) and said, "Oh Prophet, I bring you morality, the very best which will serve you in this world and the next. It will help you mend brotherly relationships and forgive those who deprive and do you wrong." You must also visit the sick, feed the hungry, release the hostages. Anyone who visits the sick is walking on the fringes of paradise, near to its fruit. The Prophet said, "Allah forbids us to gossip and to keep repeating the same requests and to waste our money. The Holy Spirit has inspired me with the knowledge that no soul will die until its time is completed and it will receive everything that Allah has intended. This is why you should fear Allah and be moderate in your demands. Do not let any among you complain, if you have to wait for Allah's favors, and do not make the mistake of trying to hasten your good fortune by acts of crime or disobedience to Allah. The reason is with Allah, nothing can be saved except through obedience to Him. The moral theme of this saying is that we should be patient, listen to Allah, live normally and not fret in times of poverty. Allah grants the means of sustaining life.

A proper Muslim is sociable, he loves people and people love him. Otherwise there is something wrong. You should

invite them for food and you should share their sorrows and their happy occasions. This does not apply only to your fellow-Muslims, but it is most important to treat the People of the Book in the same way, i.e., Jews and Christians. This will soften their hearts and establish trust. The Prophet himself and his companions visited non-Muslims and ate with them. You should be faithful, even to those who betray you, trustworthy even towards those who cheat you. You should be just even towards the unjust and sinful, truthful even towards liars. This is because if we are tempted to take revenge by copying bad behavior, this harms us. We should not hold bad behavior of other people, or give them a bad reputation or hold them in contempt. We should be steadfast, casting away all doubt. We should believe firmly in Allah's justice and mercy. A man should control his senses, desires and feelings, and reform himself and invite others to righteousness. A person who has a sense of shame will not act indiscriminately. It is very important for a Muslim to control his tongue and to measure his words, and to make sure that his words bear fruit. The Muslim should work for his living and be independent. It is forbidden to beg for it like collecting dirt upon oneself. A Muslim should be content with his destiny and it is the duty of the rich people not to let the needy suffer. We are obliged to cultivate our world and increase its beauty and fruitfulness even when the end of the world is at hand. Even if a man is holding a seedling in his hand when he sees the signs of the Hereafter he should plant it. Those who follow him may eat of its fruit. There are many verses in the Qur'an about the necessity of working. Babies in the womb are not required to work for their food. As we become older, Allah wishes us to work for our living. The sky does not shower gold

and silver, only rain, which helps our crops to grow and our cattle to graze, and fills the rivers for irrigation and drinking-water. It is irreligious to let our money pile up. We should use it for the benefit of the society, but without extravagance. A Muslim should not abuse his wealth by taking interest on loans or by using it as a means of violating the rights of others. Charity is always mentioned in connection with prayer. If we do not soften our own hearts to the needy what benefit will we have from our prayers? What do we expect Allah to give us if we do not give to the servants? Giving in Allah's way gives us happiness and stability and lightness of mind. Muslims should be humble and keep away from abusive people. A Muslim should not boast of his wealth or rank or genealogy. Anyone who does so is far from Allah and subject to His wrath. People will dislike him and wish him bad luck and even death. We should do good for our family, relations and friends. Charity and kindness are the cement of relationships. They are also like divine wakes, which cleans our souls and refreshes our hearts; and lifts us above envy and jealousy, which destroy our souls and our society.

We should be tolerant of other people, and forgive those who quarrel with us and gossip about us, to the best of our ability. Once, the Prophet (pbuh) said to his Companions,

> *"Can you not be like Abu Damdam who lived before you?" They said, "Who was Abu Damdam and what did he do?" The answer was, "He used to say every night before going to bed, 'O Allah, I command my dignity to Your charge, people may say what they like about me, I forgive them in advance, that is the act of charity I perform.'"*

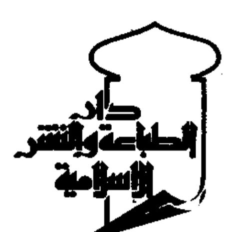
A man is responsible for his own actions towards his fellow man. He will be held accountable for all his actions in this world. In the same way as a man likes to pay his employees exactly according to the work they have done, Allah will pay His people according to the work they have done. The fact of personal responsibility does not invalidate the power of intercession. This is an extra gift of Allah and comes exactly according to His will. It does not excuse Muslims from their basic duties. It is an extra mercy from Allah. Allah gives us responsibilities according to our capabilities. This is why prayer is shortened in the time of traveling and may be performed at any time possible, and without facing Makkah if this is difficult. Some people and nursing mothers do not have to fast, and so on. As an act of mercy, Allah also created our conscience to keep us alert to our mistakes and to give us an immediate reaction to good and bad. The true Muslim is not above committing an error or a sin, but he then realizes his mistake and is quick to repent. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

> *"If your sin makes you feel bad, and your good deed makes you feel happy, then you are a true believer."*

We have already mentioned the *Hadith* that the believer sees his sins heavy like a mountain hanging over his head and ready to fall on him. The hypocrite regards his sin as a fly that passes his nose and he removes it and makes it fly away. But the function of a conscience should be to help us to evaluate our actions and to repent for our mistakes. Repentance should be deep and true, not a mere mouthing of words. It is an action, and determination not to repeat the mistake and not to commit other sins. In every verse of the Qur'an where Allah commands us to

repent, He also calls upon us to abandon sin altogether and to do good. Allah is always ready to forgive our sins, however great.

Printed in Egypt by ISLAMIC PRINTING & PUBLISHING Co. Tel:. 015 / 363314 - 362313



مطابع دار الطباعة والنشر الإسلامية

العاشر من رمضان المنطقة الصناعية ب ٢ - تليفاكس : ٣٦٣٣١٤ - ٣٦٢٣١٣

مكتب القاهرة : مدينة نصر ١٢ ش ابن هانيء الأندلسي ت : ٤٠٣٨١٣٧ - تليفاكس : ٤٠١٧٠٥٣